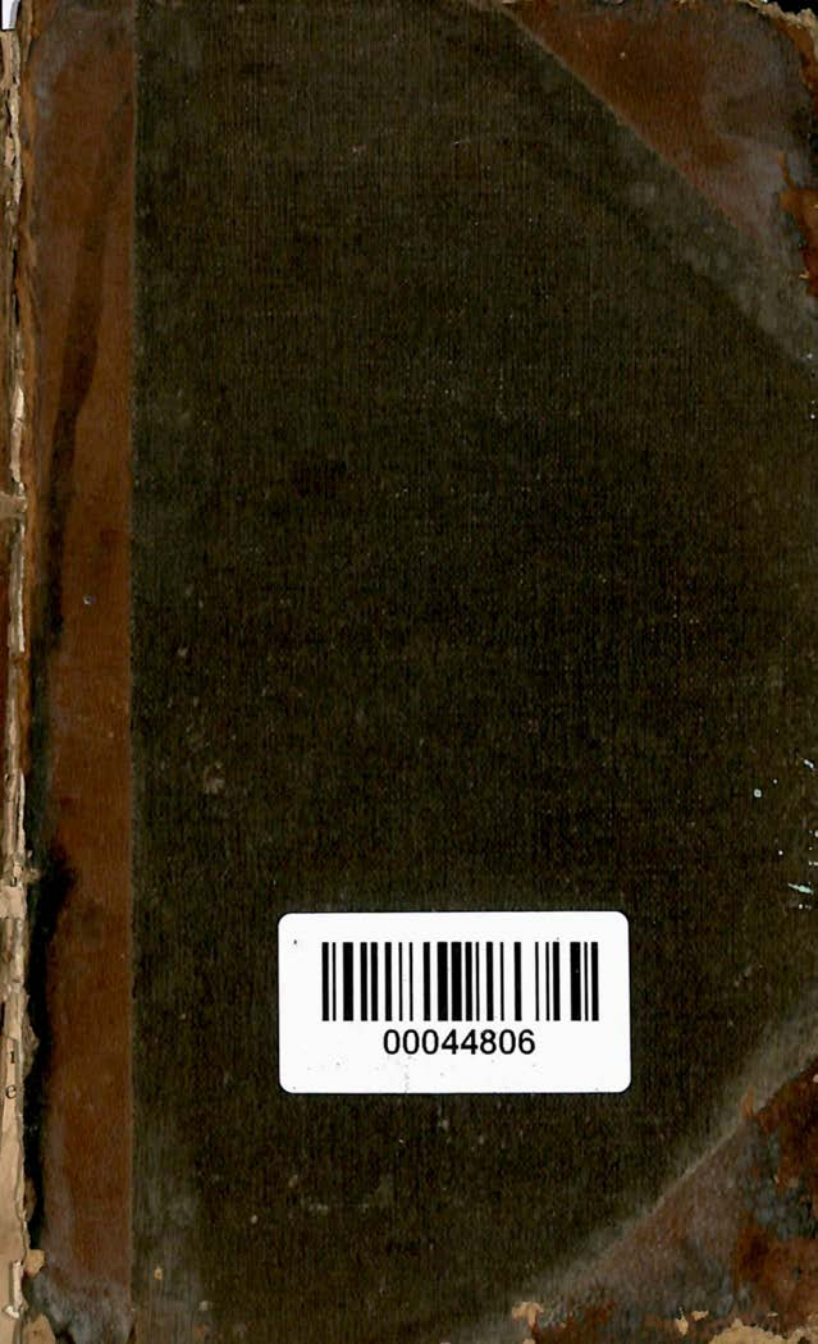
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PREFACE.

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poetic genius of the modern world was impelled by the very exigencies of his fortune, to exert his gigantic force of will in moulding the boundless stores of his imagination into the most concentrated of all poetic forms—the form which, in its very nature, is yet more *indicative* and *suggestive* than it is *expressive*—the form which not merely *admits*, but which *demands* living impersonation.

Can we, then, wonder, that the need of actual embodiment which is felt more or less by the silent reader of any true dramatic poetry, should be *intensely* experienced by the literary student of Shakespeare—that he should feel the want of a living voice and look, informing every "Delphic line," illuminating each pregnant phrase, which, for mere silent interpretation, has literally "too much conceiving." With earnest eloquence we find this want breathed out by the most thoughtful of his English expositors:—

"What would appear mad or ludicrous in a book," says Coleridge, "when presented to the senses under the form of reality, and with the truth of nature, supplies a species of actual experience. This is indeed the special privilege of a great actor over a great poet. No part was ever played in perfection, but Nature justified herself in the hearts of all her children, in what state soever they were, short of abso-

lute moral exhaustion or downright stupidity. There is no time given to ask questions or to pass judgments; we are taken by storm; and though, in the histrionic art, many a clumsy counterfeit, by caricature of one or two features, may gain applause as a fine likeness, yet never was the very thing rejected as a counterfeit.

"O! when I think of the inexhaustible mine of virgin treasure in our Shakspeare,—that I have been almost daily reading him since I was ten years old,—that the thirty intervening years have been unintermittingly and not fruitlessly employed in the study of the Greek, Latin, English, Italian, Spanish, and German *belle-lettrists*,—and the last fifteen years, in addition, far more intensely in the analysis of the laws of life and reason as they exist in man,—and that upon every step I have made forward in taste, in acquisition of facts from history or my own observation, and in knowledge of the different laws of being and their apparent exceptions, from accidental collision of disturbing forces,—that at every new accession of information,—after every successful exercise of meditation, and every fresh presentation of experience,—I have unfailingly discovered a proportionate increase of wisdom and intuition in Shakspeare;—when I know this, and know too, that by a conceivable and pos-

sible, though hardly to be expected, arrangement of the British theatres, not all indeed, but a large, a very large, proportion of this indefinite all—(round which no comprehension has yet drawn the line of circumscription, so as to say to itself, 'I have seen the whole')—might be sent into the heads and hearts—into the very souls of the mass of mankind, to whom, except by this living comment and interpretation, it must remain for ever a sealed volume, a deep well without a wheel or a windlass;—it seems to me a pardonable enthusiasm, to steal away from sober likelihood, and share in so rich a feast in the faery world of possibility! Yet even in the grave cheerfulness of a circumspect hope, much, very much, might be done; enough, assuredly, to furnish a kind and strenuous nature with ample motives for the attempt to effect what may be effected."*

Here is a standing protest, which comes now with the solemnity of a voice from the tomb, against the doctrine maintained by one class of critics in the present day, that the time is gone by when the study of Shakespeare could demand or even admit of histrionic aid, and that such is peculiarly the case with his more ideal creations. On the contrary, as is especially exemplified in that elaborate examination of the character of Imogen, which forms one portion of the

* 'Literary Remains,' vol. ii. pp. 51-3.

present volume, "the nobler and richer the ideal portrait sketched by the dramatist, the greater ever is the task, not only of expression, but of completion, in a kindred spirit of art, imposed upon its histrionic representative. The more thoroughly any reader shall have possessed himself of the true spirit and meaning of any portion of Shakespeare's dramatic text, the more will he be in a condition to receive that additional and crowning illustration which no critic or commentator can give him—which can only come from the performer whom Nature and Shakespeare have themselves inspired, and which is indispensable to realize to us that living and breathing creation which each of these dramas primarily was in the mind of its author."

In short, until the love and the study of Shakespeare shall cease altogether amongst his countrymen, will the British stage remain invested with the high office, however unworthily discharging it, of giving effective interpretation to the profoundest oracles of the most inspired of poets. And until the once proud spirit of England shall be dead to all sense of her intellectual honour, must she feel that honour to be vitally interested in providing whatever means may be requisite, whether in the way of public encouragement or of legislative institution, to call forth, to cultivate, and to perpetuate that

school of histrionic art, inspired by poetic genius, which alone can ensure a permanent competence, in her metropolitan theatres, to save her from the deep disgrace in the eyes of her cultivated neighbours, which must ever attend her inability to make her boasted Shakespeare worthily seen and heard in his own peculiar temple.

Nor is this all. There is not only this negative dishonour to be avoided: there is a positively disgraceful perversion to be remedied, for doing which the agency of a regenerated stage is indispensable. The vitiation here alluded to, seems to have escaped even the penetration of Coleridge; nor, perhaps, could it be clearly discovered by anything short of the closely analytic process which has been applied to the several Shakespearian creations examined in the following pages. This mode of examination, however, has led their author to the clearest conviction that in one instance after another, the best-reputed expositors of Shakespeare have delivered interpretations of his principal meaning in a particular drama, and of his conception of its leading characters, which it is impossible that they should have drawn from an unprejudiced consideration of his own unmutilated text. The question which naturally and immediately presented itself to the writer's mind,

has been—From whence, then, can these misinterpretations have arisen? And on turning from the established criticism to the actual stage, he has found, in each instance, a ready solution of this problem, in the fact that these critics themselves have ever come to the consideration of Shakespeare's text, unconsciously prepossessed by the perverted stage impressions of their youth, or by interpretations of their critical predecessors, derived through the same distorting theatrical medium. To understand this distinctly, requires a glance over the larger features of our modern theatrical history.

At the opening of its second great era, after the puritanical interregnum, the taste of the restored court, at once foreign and depraved, threw the re-establishment and remoulding of the stage into the hands—not of that class of critics who studied, loved, and venerated Shakespeare in the spirit of a Milton—but of the Davenants and the Drydens—the men who, in all the flippant presumption and boundless self-sufficiency which possessed them by virtue of that pseudo-classical code of taste which they had imported from France, proceeded (as in the signal case of 'Macbeth,' so fully treated in the following pages) to *remodel* the works of their divine predecessor, condemning and rejecting from

them, as gross and barbarous, whatever they found it impracticable to squeeze into their Procrustes' bed of polite criticism.

This operation was peculiarly facilitated by the protracted interruption which had taken place, of *histrionic* tradition from the elder and better stage. So that, not only the moulding of the drama itself, but the formation of a school of acting, and the establishing a body of histrionic and theatrical precedent, were vested virtually in the hands of the same fashionable critics of the day. No wonder that they performed the latter task in strict accordance with the spirit in which they executed the former. No wonder that the actors, and the actresses, remained the very humble servants and pupils of them and their successors in the same school for the next half-century at least.

Since then, however, our national stage has too well avenged upon our criticism its long subjection to that misleading thraldom. When, in the days of Pope, and of Johnson, the written Shakespeare came once more to be recognized at least as *a* great British classic,—and his unmutilated page began consequently to grow more and more current,—it was not to be expected that the mind either of reader or of critic would find itself all at once in a state for considering, with judgment unwarped and dis-

cernment unconfused, even the lucid but pregnant and subtle text now laid in full before them. Not only did the critics, following habitually in the track of their predecessors, continue to judge the great dramatist by canons to which he is not amenable,—but, having their intellectual vision unconsciously blinded or confused by the vivid and repeated impression with which the gross perversions and often *in*versions of the poet's deeper meaning, on the stage, had operated on their early associations respecting him,—they often mistook the originally most obvious import of his plot, his character, and even his dialogue,—unwittingly haunted, while expounding the very letter of his work, by that erring spirit which their predecessors had but too wilfully infused into his theatrical interpreters.

In this vicious circle our stage and our criticism have ever since been more or less revolving. In the work of rectification, the stage itself may do much; but in producing a thorough Shakespearian reform, it is our literary criticism that must lead the way. The writer, if his views be sound, may bring them to bear upon the false prepossessions of his readers again and again, with persevering, certain, and decisive effect. But the power of the most inspired actor—vivid and electric as it is—though occasionally darting conviction upon

opposing prejudice, must often fail to move, or shake but feebly, the force of rootedly hostile misconception. And the actress, it need scarcely be observed, from the yet greater delicacy of art which she has to display, especially in the more ideal heroines of Shakespeare, finds herself at a still greater and more hazardous disadvantage in endeavouring to substitute a new and just in place of an erroneous but prescriptive interpretation.

And then, as if expressly to deprive the stage of such power of this kind as was otherwise inherent in it, came the preposterous dimensions of the rebuilt patent theatres, to seal, for a dismal season, the doom of fine acting itself, especially in the characters of Shakespeare.* The Kembles, indeed, and the other genuine artists already formed and established, were in little danger of descending to adapt themselves to the monstrous physical circumstances thus created around them; they simply ceased to be seen and heard, felt and enjoyed, as of old. But the *new* aspirants in such an arena, having their reputation to *make* in it,

* This *mathematically* necessary consequence of the inordinate magnitude of the new houses, has been demonstrated most conclusively again and again: but to all of the present generation to whom the argument may not be familiar, we recommend it, to peruse attentively the deliberate and very competent as well as feeling testimony of Sir Walter Scott to this injurious fact—speaking as an experienced eye and ear witness,—in reviewing Boaden's Life of John Philip Kemble, in the Quarterly Review (No. 67) for June, 1826.

had every temptation to rant and gesticulate, in order to be sure of impressing at all the majority of their audience. Thus it was not only natural, but inevitable, that the school of high histrionic art among us, rapidly declining, should make room for the chief melodramatic actor of the day to offer himself, and be accepted by the new generation, as a hero of Shakespearian tragedy.

But in the same proportion as this physical condition of our national theatres has been favourable and encouraging to vulgar exaggeration in the performer, has it been depressing to any true and refined inspiration. We find this especially exemplified in the professional history of our first living actress. Once removed from the absorbing and effacing vastness of the *great* London theatres, — and at the same time from the oppressive contact of an uncongenial style in an ascendant actor, — that noble, delicate, and various imagination, — those rich, exquisite, and versatile powers of expression, — with which Nature and culture have so remarkably endowed her, — have made themselves more known and estimated by the world. Hers is the singular fortune, to have added to her true Shakespearian honours the glory of reviving to our very senses the noblest dramatic heroines of ancient Greece — not the corrupt antique of the French, nor the mock

antique of any other modern school—but the genuine creations of a Sophocles and an Euripides.* Yet well she might do so. The noblest womanhood is essentially the same in every age. It revealed itself to the soul of Sophocles as to that of Shakespeare. And verily, the men and women of old Greece, to whose "nature" *her* dramatists "held up the mirror," were not framed of marble—as a certain sort of critics among us seem to suppose—but of sensitive, imaginative, and impassioned, as well as intellectual and heroic, flesh and blood. The Grecian fire inspired the Grecian grace. An *Antigone* is elder sister to an *Imogen*.

The writer of these pages is peculiarly bound to acknowledge his obligations to the artist here in question. To the study of her Shakespearian performances, amid the dearth of high poetic art upon our stage, he mainly owes his lively and profound conviction of the indispensability of adequate acting, to bring the full sense of Shakespeare home to the minds and feelings of mankind,—and of its yet more pressing necessity, to aid the efforts of

* Miss Helen Faucit's *Antigone* is well known and established as one of the great classic features of modern histrionic art; and the testimonial which it produced her from the whole body of men of highest classical attainment in the Anglo-Irish metropolis, has been recognized as one of the proudest ever rendered to a great intellectual artist. For the account of her *Iphigenia in Aulis*, see all the Dublin journals of Monday, November 30th, 1846.

the literary expositor in eradicating false conceptions which the stage itself has implanted or confirmed. The author's reasons for dwelling especially, in these essays, upon the leading female characters of Shakespeare, he gave in the first of the series of papers that follow: but he owes it to the same performer, now to state explicitly, that every successive study of her acting has more and more convinced him of that which he suspected from the first—the deeply injurious depreciation which the poet's finest models of exalted womanhood have suffered, both from theatrical and from critical hands. Well indeed, then, may his countrywomen of the present day be assured—even as they have faith in woman and in Shakespeare—that not only the honour of the one sex, but the improvement and the happiness of both, are interested in their studying, and causing to be studied, the Shakespearian personations of such an artist, so true in conception and so perfect in expression.

October, 1847.

STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE.

I.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

[February 4th, 1843.]

THE present essay is one result of certain reflections into which we have been led on the state of our current theatrical criticism,—especially of that upon the acting of Shakespeare's plays,—so unsatisfactory does it seem to us on the whole, so inadequate either to guide the taste and judgment of the public, or to instruct and encourage the performer.

This, no doubt, is partly attributable to the very limited space and time which alone any kind of periodical can devote to such notices, in the form which is almost exclusively assigned to them, as articles of *news*. However, we cannot but regard the deficiency in question as arising in some degree from deeper sources, distinct from each other, yet closely akin;—first, the still crude and imperfect state of such criticism as we possess of Shakespeare's plays themselves, viewed, not under a merely literary aspect, as poetry in the limited sense, but in their proper and primary character, as productions of dramatic art; and secondly, the prevalent want, in the theatrical

reporter, of diligently and conscientiously applying such critical light as has been thrown upon the general spirit of a play, or the conception of its individual characters, in forming his judgment as to the truth and efficiency of any given histrionic expression of them.

It is in the hope of contributing, however slightly, towards remedying each of these critical deficiencies, that we have resolved to notice, from time to time, without binding ourselves to any strictly systematic review, such points of interest regarding the spirit, structure, or characters of the piece, the general management of its representation, or the acting of the particular parts, as shall most conveniently present themselves to us in such of the Shakespearian dramas as derive a more immediately vivid interest in the public mind, from the fact of their being for the time before the public *eye*, upon the actual stage.

We are strongly persuaded that no revolution of national manners, still less any mere variation of fashionable habits, will ever, with Englishmen, confine the study of Shakespeare to the closet, and destroy their appetite for having his creations placed before them visibly and audibly. Of no other dramatist whatever, of any country, are we prepared to affirm so much; but of him, the *one*, unrivalled and alone in his human omniscience and his dramatic omnipotence, we believe it. Nay, we believe the very contrary of that which some people seem to anticipate—that the present great extension of the reading of Shakespeare, by the publication of such multiplied editions, so accessible by their cheapness or so attractive by their embellishments, will more or less relax the public desire to see and hear his imaginings "bodied forth" in vivid reality of sight and sound. We believe that the more intently his "Delphic lines" are perused—the more that "deep impression" which Milton attributes to them, is imbibed in the closet—the more irresistible will be the reader's inclination to repair thither where he can be assured of having

them rendered to him with all the glowing and thrilling expressiveness of eye, and voice, and action.

Why this is so transcendently the case with the dramas of Shakespeare, will hereafter receive some particular illustration; but the greatest, most comprehensive reason of all exists, we conceive, in the happy fatality which ordained that the man who, of all men known to us, possessed the truest and most pervading insight into every condition of the human mind and heart, was trained in dramatic composition upon the very boards—that the great poet and the great manager grew as one—that the great artist whom they combined to form, composed immediately for

The very faculties of eyes and ears.

How much this constant writing, or rather, we should say, creating, to a living and present audience, must have contributed to that wonderfully concentrated force, and that exquisite fitness for dramatic effect, which are found in every part of his action, character, and dialogue, it needs little reflection to discover. No wonder that the real world so habitually presented itself to him as

This wide and universal theatre.

No wonder that he could, with such consummate art, introduce the theatre itself upon the scene, and so give double force to the illusion of his principal action.

It is in the play of 'Hamlet,' as every one knows, that he has done this most systematically and elaborately. Here he has not only made use of this means to deliver, in a form at once brief and luminous, all the essential principles both of dramatic and of histrionic art, but has triumphantly vindicated the true dignity of both; that dignity to which, in his own age and country, he must have been conscious that he had chiefly contributed to raise them. In *Polonius's* estimate of the players, and the style of his criticism, are admirably exhibited the manner in

which they were actually treated in Shakespeare's time, and the spirit in which they were commonly regarded by the court and by the great—by those who looked upon the theatre as they did upon the domestic fool, merely as a source of idle and profitless pastime; while in all *Hamlet's* discourses to, or concerning them, we trace the great dramatist's own idea of the high moral as well as æsthetic purpose of their art, and the corresponding appreciation which it merited from the highest order of cultivated intellect and taste. It was, in fact, an unanswerable assertion of the highest prerogatives of the drama, as the noblest field of art and the most effective school of morals, not only in his own time, but for all time to come.

So long as the great poet and manager could preside over the rehearsal of his own plays, it is clear that no other guide was necessary or admissible to direct the actors to the true conception and expression of every character they contain. Neither could the termination of his personal connexion with the stage, nor even his decease, prevent the tradition of his own *readings*—his own view of the histrionic rendering of each part—from being handed down pretty faithfully during the comparatively short period which elapsed until the conclusion of the first great era of our dramatic history, by the entire closing of the theatres under the sway of the Puritans.

"It was one of the vital and lasting injuries inflicted on the theatrical system by the puritanical suppression, that the old line of actors, which had risen and flourished along with the great and vigorous dramatic school of the age of Elizabeth and James, and had intimately imbibed its healthy natural tone—had 'grown with its growth and strengthened with its strength'—was violently and fatally interrupted. A new race of actors had to arise, who, not having, like their predecessors of the former period, the example and the awe of the great histrionic models of the old school before them, found it a much easier task to strut and rant in the delivery of unnatural

bombast, than to sound the depths and reach the delicacies of Nature's favourite poet. And thus an additional facility was opened for the introduction and perpetuation upon the stage, of the factitious taste of Dryden and his followers.

"Garrick's restoration of Shakespeare to his rightful supremacy over the English theatre, has entailed upon his countrymen a permanent debt of gratitude, which is yet more glorious to the memory of that great performer than the idolatrous admiration of his contemporaries for his unrivalled histrionic powers. It was nothing less than the removal of one great mark, worn for eighty years before, of national degradation, morally and intellectually. Here, too, we have a signal instance of the great degree in which the dignity and prosperity of a national theatre, at any given period, may depend on the taste and genius of a single actor, especially when that actor becomes a leading manager also. In the instance in question, this was more peculiarly and necessarily the case. When the condition of the English stage for three generations before is considered, it is quite evident that no person but an actor of very high genius could achieve the theatrical resuscitation of the greatest of all dramatic poets. Had any such actor existed at the Restoration of Charles the Second, he might probably have done much to prevent the wretched denationalization of the theatre, which was so much favoured by that king's exotic and vitiated taste. It was left for one qualified to be the great actor of nature, to lead forth the sublime poet of nature from his long theatrical obscurity. The clear, deep, quick, and varied truth which appeared in Garrick's interpretation of Shakespeare's leading characters, after all the cold, leaden, formal declamation under which even the best-esteemed performers had so long been accustomed to smother their spirit, was nothing less than a revelation to the play-going public of that day."*

* Article on Dramatic Art and Literature, in the Penny Cyclopædia.

Yet the injury done by the loss above-mentioned, of all theatrical tradition on the subject, to the true conception, both on the part of the actors and the public, not only of each individual character of Shakespeare, but of its relation to every other in the same play, and to the general spirit of the piece, was not capable of being repaired by a theatrical manager, how high soever his qualifications might otherwise be, who had become such, not like Shakespeare, by virtue of being a great dramatist, but through his being a great actor merely. The engrossing attention which his histrionic vocation occasioned him to give to a certain number of the most prominent parts, and that full share of professional vanity which constantly inclined him to attach to those parts a too exclusive and absorbing importance, were quite enough to prevent even Garrick from ascending to that highest artistic view of any one of the dramas of Shakespeare, which had occupied their first great manager's own mind. Yet the full possession of this highest view can alone enable the individual who presides over the distribution and rehearsal of the parts in any one of those plays, to discharge his high office with such perfect comprehension and discrimination as to realize, in the whole performance, and in all its details, the true and original idea conceived of the work by its great creator. Garrick, then, we repeat, did all, and more than all, that an actor could have been expected to do in this matter—he gave the first grand and decisive impulse towards the revivification of Shakespeare on the stage. But before this great resuscitation could be thoroughly accomplished, it was an indispensable prelude, that not only the genius of Shakespeare in general, but the spirit, structure, and execution of each particular drama, should be expounded by a criticism of the very highest order.

Why, down to the early part of the present century, no such exalted criticism in any department of art, and least of all in dramatic art, arose in England,

is beside our immediate purpose to inquire. We must, however, observe, that our Shakespearian criticism of the last century was too much in the spirit of Polonius's own; dwelling exclusively on parts and details—shewing an analytic mind of a vulgar order. "This is too long"—"That is good; *mobled queen* is good"—"That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; *beautified* is a vile phrase."—Such is the critical style of Shakespeare's loquacious and pedantic lord chamberlain; and much about the same is that of his commentators of the old school. In Hamlet himself, on the contrary, we find, among so many other ideal qualities, a type of the superior critic, who not only examines and judges, but who understands and feels. Again, Polonius, criticises like a true matter-of-fact man, abounding in worldly wisdom, as we see in his admirable parting advice to his son; Hamlet, like a poet—and a dramatic poet especially—for we find him playing both the manager and the dramatist yet more than the critic. Indeed, none but a poetic mind is a competent judge of poetry, literary or artistic.

Such minds, within the present century, have seriously and systematically applied themselves to appreciate and illustrate the dramatic genius of Shakespeare. But even the Schlegels and the Coleridges have scarcely done more than trace out and indicate the central idea, the individual spirit, which informs each one of his greater dramas, and moulds every one of its features in harmony with that peculiar inspiring soul. To descend to those features themselves—to trace the vital ramification through all the details of character, incident, and dialogue—a process indispensable to the reader's thorough conception and feeling of the piece, and to the manager's perfectly intelligent preparation of its performance—is the important and attractive labour which remains to be performed by English criticism.

We say, it remains to be performed—for it is remarkable that even Hazlitt, in his 'Characters of

Shakespear's Plays,' while assigning the publication of Schlegel's 'Dramatic Lectures' in English as his immediate motive to the composition of that volume of essays, and citing Schlegel's estimate of Shakespeare so largely in his preface, does not apply to any one play as a whole, nor to any individual character in it, that method of examination which an attentive perusal of Schlegel's book should, we think, have naturally suggested. The English critic, with all his sagacity, keen sense of poetic beauty, and logical acuteness, seems but imperfectly to have apprehended the inmost spirit of Shakespeare as the great *dramatic artist.* This fundamental deficiency, leaving him without that sure guide which he would otherwise have found to the surveying of each play, and each character in it, from the *one* right point of view, not only prevented him from clearly expounding to us the distinguishing individual spirit of each drama as a whole, but has caused him, even among so many striking and instructive observations which those essays contain, to fall into some serious misconceptions respecting divers of the prominent characters, which we shall venture to point out, should occasion require it from us.

Still less does the authoress of the 'Characteristics of Women' seem to us to display that highest artistic as well as philosophically poetic appreciation of Shakespeare's dramatic personages, which can only be acquired by surveying each entire drama, in the first instance, from the most elevated point of view. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jameson's work contains much agreeable and some original remark; and gives a more systematic and complete account of Shakespeare's female characters, than Hazlitt's volume affords of his characters in general.

Now, the more that a deep and intimate knowledge of the noble and subtle essence of Shakespeare's leading characters is acquired and diffused, the stronger and more general, assuredly, will be the feeling of reverence for the qualities of a great Shakespearian

performer, and the nearer will the spirit of current criticism on Shakespearian acting approach to that double character which the sublimely humane influence of Shakespeare's own genius should infuse into it,—of gratitude for all of that divine essence which the actor has succeeded in embodying,—and of the most urbane admonition and kindest instruction regarding his apparent deficiencies. Since, then, it so happens, that in that literary examination and appreciation of the characters, which we deem indispensable for preparing the public mind to render discriminating justice to the histrionic performance of them, it is the female ones, in all their rich and delicate variety, that have been most fully and elaborately treated, and that by a feminine hand,—for this reason chiefly it is—this greater preparation which the wide circulation of Mrs. Jameson's 'Characteristics' has given to the public mind for the study of Shakespeare's women, beyond what has hitherto reached it respecting the characters of his men, that we may be led, as their theatrical performance shall furnish the occasion, to consider his principal female characters before entering, except incidentally, on the examination of his male ones.

We confess, too, that another feeling — surely a natural and a manly one—inclines us to this course—the peculiar interest which we cannot but feel for the position, personal and artistical, of the representatives of his matchless heroines. Ministering as they do in the noblest of all temples of art and poetry, they seem to us, in their professional vocation, to bear a character peculiarly sacred; adding to the Shakespearian scene that crowning charm, that "bright consummate flower" of genuine female grace, which the mighty magician who so transcendently conceived it was destined never to behold upon his boards. In this view, the shade of Shakespeare himself might be grateful to them, for their sweet enrichment of the modern stage. What though it be given to few of them to approach the excellence of a Barry or a

Siddons—let us consider how much we have to thank them for attaining—and it will strike us that we shall sin far less in being "to their faults a little blind," than we should in withholding from them our cordial acknowledgments for rendering to us so much of what is most delightful in the most delicate beings of the poet's creation. And the greater the variety of powers in the actress, the more should this feeling be deepened in our hearts. Some few weeks ago, for instance, we beheld the same young performer who, the very evening before, had shaken us with the passionate indignation, melted and thrilled us with the awfully beautiful despair, of Constance of Bretagne, in that stately historic play, infuse into the part of Rosalind all the tender though lively grace which the poet has made its principal attribute and most exquisite attraction—breathing the soul of elegance, wit, and feeling, through that noble forest pastoral. Reflecting upon this, we said to ourselves, Truly there is something in female genius and female energy—something worthy of Shakespeare—worthy to be cherished with the holiest of all sacred feelings, that of affectionate veneration.

As the historical play of 'King John,' produced by Mr. Macready with so much care and magnificence, has occupied so large a place among the performances of the present season, we shall, in pursuance of the course we have indicated, devote one or two following papers to the characters of the three royal ladies in that richly various drama, Constance of Bretagne, Elinor of Guienne, and Blanch of Castile—not quite forgetting the Lady Faulconbridge, "whose fault was not her folly." In the course of this, as of all our subsequent examinations, while freely acknowledging such indications as we may derive, either from Hazlitt's 'Characters,' or from Mrs. Jameson's work, we shall point out with equal freedom those instances in which it shall appear to us that either the deceased or the living critic has formed an erroneous or imperfect conception of their common subject.

II.

FEMALE CHARACTERS IN 'KING JOHN.'

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1. CHARACTER OF THE LADY CONSTANCE.

[February 11th, 1843.]

In her elaborate consideration of the character of The Lady Constance, Mrs. Jameson falls somewhat into the error which has constantly, more or less, been committed in treating of Shakespeare's historical plays—that of failing to consider, not only the composition of each drama on the whole, but the conception and developement of every character in it, primarily and independently with relation to dramatic art, and without any regard whatever to real or alleged departures from the literal or even the substantial truth of history. Unless this point of view be steadily maintained by the critic in forming his *dramatic* judgment, his opinions will, at every moment, be liable to fall into inconsistency and injustice. A very little reflection should have sufficed to shew any commentator the preposterousness of dragging Shakespeare, the dramatist—the dramatist transcendently and exclusively—to the bar of historical criticism—a kind of procedure which, in the following observations, we shall studiously avoid.

The subject of the piece before us, then, is not so much 'The Life and Death of King John,' as it is the

triumph of right, and justice, and feeling, and beauty, and poetry, for all time, in the universal heart of mankind, over the very meanness, selfishness, and crime, which oppress and crush them for the hour. Whatever doubts might exist at the historic period in question, as to the validity of young Arthur's title to the crown of *England*, any such doubtful title would have been little to the purpose of the dramatist; and accordingly we find, in the play, that Arthur's claim and John's usurpation are regarded by all parties as clear and indisputable. In the very opening of the piece,

> Your strong possession, much more than your right,
> Or else it must go wrong with you and me,

says John's mother, Queen Elinor, assuredly his warmest and staunchest partisan. This clearness of Arthur's title cannot be overlooked for a moment, without essentially perverting and weakening the interest which the poet has attached to the position as well as character of the widowed mother, Constance of Bretagne. Nor is it Shakespeare's fault if the reader or spectator fail to be forcibly reminded of this fact, at numerous intervals throughout the play. Among the most remarkable of these instances are the passages to that effect in those ruminating speeches of Faulconbridge (the most intelligent as well as devoted and spirited of John's adherents) which form, as it were, the chorus of the tragedy. Thus, when moralising on the peace patched up between the two kings by the marriage of Blanch to the Dauphin, he speaks of the French monarch as one

> — whose armour conscience buckled on,
> Whom zeal and charity brought to the field,
> As God's own soldier;

and adds that this "commodity," this self-interest, against which the speaker is railing,

> Hath drawn him from his own determin'd aid,
> From a resolv'd and honourable war,
> To a most base and vile-concluded peace.

Again, at the close of the fourth act, over the dead body of Arthur, addressing Hubert, he says —

> Go, bear him in thine arms.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> How easy dost thou take all England up!
> From forth this morsel of dead royalty,
> The life, the right, and truth, of all this realm
> Is fled to heaven.

It is in tracing the course of the retribution upon John, political and personal, as a usurper and a murderer, brought upon him by those unscrupulous means which he had taken to prevent it, that the interest of the concluding act resides, and the satisfaction which it affords to the feelings of the auditor.

So far, then, from representing either Arthur or his mother as ambitious, the poet, in legitimate pursuit of his *dramatic* object, has studiously excluded from view every historical circumstance that could countenance the smallest impression of that nature. He has not only reduced the prince's age to such tender years as would hardly admit of his harbouring a political sentiment; but, in direct opposition to the recorded facts, represents the boy as one of a peculiarly mild and quiet temper, devoid of all princely airs and all appetite for command—simple-hearted, meek, and affectionate. He weeps at the violent scene produced by his mother's meeting with Queen Elinor, and exclaims,

> Good my mother, peace!
> I would that I were low laid in my grave;
> I am not worth this coil that's made for me.

Again, to his mother's violent grief at hearing of the accommodation between the two kings, he says,

> I do beseech you, madam, be content.

And again, in "his innocent prate" to his keeper Hubert,

> So I were out of prison, and kept sheep,
> I should be merry as the day is long, &c.

Is it not plain that this very inoffensiveness is designed by the dramatist to place in the stronger light the clearness of Arthur's title, as the *exclusive* reason for his uncle's hostility, at the same time that it deepens so wonderfully the pathos of the scene wherein he pleads for the preservation of his eyes? Another element of this pathos is, the exceeding beauty which the poet has ascribed to the princely boy, which is made to affect the hearts of all who approach him, even the rudest of his uncle's creatures, and gives to this only orphan child the crowning endearment to his widowed mother's heart.

That mother herself, it is most important to observe and to bear in mind, whatever she was in history, is *not* represented by the poet as courting power for its own sake. Had he so represented her, it would have defeated one of those fine contrasts of character in which Shakespeare so much delighted—that between Constance and Elinor, which is perfect in every way. The whole conduct and language of Constance in the piece, shew that her excessive fondness for her son, and that alone, makes her so eagerly desire the restitution of his lawful inheritance. She longs to see this one sole, and beautiful, and gracious object of her maternal idolatry, placed on the pedestal of grandeur which is his birthright, that she may idolize it more fondly still—

> Thou and thine usurp
> The domination, royalties and rights
> Of this oppressed boy.

Such is her defiance to Elinor. Still more strikingly unfolded is the entire subordination, in the breast of Constance, of all ambitious view, to the concentrated feelings of the doting mother, in the well-known address to Arthur, when her sworn friends have betrayed her:—

> If thou, that bidst me be content, wert grim,
> Ugly and slanderous to thy mother's womb,
> . . . . . .
> I would not care, I then would be content;

> For then I should not love thee; no, nor thou
> Become thy great birth, nor deserve a crown.
> But thou art fair; and at thy birth, dear boy!
> Nature and Fortune join'd to make thee great.
> Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast,
> And with the half-blown rose. But Fortune, oh!
> She is corrupted, chang'd, and, won from thee,
> Adulterates hourly with thine uncle John.

If we could still doubt the absolute and all-absorbing predominance of the maternal affection, it is disclosed to us in all its awful and beautiful depth, in those bursts of sublimest poetry that gush from her heart when informed of Arthur's capture. In all these she never once thinks of him as a prince, who ought to be a king—far less of the station to which she is herself entitled. It is the thought of never more beholding her "absent child," her "pretty Arthur," her "fair son," that is driving her to distraction—

> I will not keep this form upon my head
> While there is such disorder in my wit.—
> O Lord! my boy! my Arthur! my fair son!
> My life! my joy! my soul! my all the world!
> My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure!

We come now to consider the most important point of all that should guide us in judging of the histrionic expression of this character—namely, the indications afforded by the whole tenour of the incident and dialogue, as to the individuality of Constance's person and disposition as a *woman*—independently even of that maternal relation in which the drama constantly places her before us.

That Constance, in the poet's conception, is of graceful as well as noble person, we are not left to infer merely from the graces of her vigorous mind, nor from the rare loveliness of her child, and her extreme sensibility to it. We hear of her beauty more explicitly from the impression which it makes upon those around her—especially from the exclamations of King Philip on beholding her distress for Arthur's loss, the greater part of which we regret to find omitted in the present acting of the play—

O, fair affliction, peace! . . . .

. . . . .

Bind up those tresses. Oh, what love I note
In the fair multitude of those her hairs, &c.

But it is the moral and intellectual beauty, the logic and the poetry of the character, that it is most essential to consider. And here we are called upon to dissent materially from the view of this matter which Mrs. Jameson has exhibited at some length. In commencing her essay on this character, she numbers among the qualities which the Lady Constance of Shakespeare has in common with the mother of Coriolanus, "self-will and exceeding pride." In a following page, she speaks again of "her haughty spirit" and "her towering pride." Again, of "her proud spirit" and "her energetic self-will;" and "her impetuous temper conflicting with her pride." Once more—"On the whole it may be said, that pride and maternal affection form the basis of the character of Constance;" and "in all the state of her great grief, a grand impersonation of pride and passion." But the contrary of all this inherent pride and self-will which the critic alleges, appears in the poet's delineation. It is the mild language of gratitude and patience that we first hear from Constance, in the scene where she thanks the French king and the Austrian duke for their espousal of her dear son's cause, but entreats them to wait for John's answer to the French ambassador before they proceed to bloodshed. In the scene where she encounters Elinor, all the "pride and self-will" are on the side of her enemies; the outraged right and feeling, on her own. To Elinor's

Who is it thou dost call usurper, France?

it is but natural that she should say,

Let me make answer—thy usurping son.

And Elinor's atrocious imputation upon her, of adultery and of guilty ambition—

Out, insolent!—thy bastard shall be king,
That thou mayst be a queen, and check the world!—

more than justifies all the keenness of retort that follows. That she resents the insults thus added to the injuries of her foes, infers but little *pride*. To have remained silent under them, would have been nothing less than meanness in any woman—most of all in a sovereign princess on so public an occasion. Again, in all her exclamations on the betrayal of her cause by her selfish allies, we find, indeed, all the sensitive and intellectual widow and mother,

Oppress'd with wrongs, and therefore full of fears;

but where is the proud self-will? It seems extraordinary that Mrs. Jameson and others should not have reflected that, had a particle of it been represented as belonging originally and inherently to the character of Constance, it would utterly have marred the grand, the sublime effect of her concluding words in this majestic scene. It is simply because there is no pride in her nature—nothing but the indispensable self-respect of the woman, the mother, and the princess,—and more especially because the whole previous tenour of this scene itself exhibits her as anything but "an impersonation of *pride*"—

For I am sick, and capable of fears;
Oppress'd with wrongs, and therefore full of fears;
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears;
A woman, naturally born to fears—

that the passage in question is so wonderfully impressive. It is not the proud, fierce, haughty woman, but the sensitive and apprehensive woman alone, lashed out of all her usual habits of mind and temper, by direst injury and basest treachery, into intense resistance and resentment, to whom it can ever occur to say,—

I will *instruct* my sorrows to be proud;
For grief is proud, and *makes* his owner stout.
To me, and to the state of my great *grief*,
Let kings assemble; for my *grief's* so great,
That no supporter but the huge firm earth

> Can hold it up. Here I and *Sorrow* sit;
> Here is my throne—bid kings come bow to it!

Here is pride indeed! wrung, for the first time, from a noble tender nature, by the awful climax of indignant sorrow, and placing the "gentle Constance" on that towering eminence from whence, in the desolate majesty of afflicted right, she hurls the keen lightnings of her eloquence upon the mean-souled great ones around her. Theirs, indeed, is the gain, but hers is the triumph!

So much have we deemed it necessary to say in vindication of the moral qualities wherewith Shakespeare has endowed his heroine. We must now say something, for the guidance, it may be, both of the reader and the performer, in correction of some erroneous views, as we esteem them, to which the authoress above-cited, and others, have given circulation, respecting the intellectual powers developed in this character. The substance of Mrs. Jameson's observations on this head is contained in the following sentence:—"The moral energy, that faculty which is principally exercised in self-control, and gives consistency to the rest, is deficient; or rather, to speak more correctly, the extraordinary developement of sensibility and imagination, which lends to the character its rich poetical colouring, leaves the other qualities comparatively subordinate."

Following out this view of the matter, Mrs. Jameson speaks of the dramatic Constance as "a generous woman, betrayed by her own rash confidence." Generous she is; but where is the rashness of her confidence? What better resource have she and her son, than to trust in the solemn protestations which the potentates best able to assist them are made to deliver at the opening of the second act? What weakness of intellect is here implied? It is clearly her best policy to confide in them. Again, Mrs. Jameson desires us to observe, that the heroine cannot, from her intellectual resources, "borrow patience to submit, or fortitude to endure." But, all feeling apart,

what, we would ask, betrayed on every hand, and friendless as she is, has she to gain by submitting and enduring? Constance herself understands her own position as clearly, as she feels it keenly; and states it, too, with her own ever forcible and coherent logic. In answer to the legate's observation, respecting the excommunication of King John—

> There's law and warrant, lady, for my curse—

most justly does she reply,—

> And for mine too: when law can do no right,
> Let it be lawful that law bar no wrong:
> Law cannot give my child his kingdom here,
> For he that holds his kingdom holds the law:
> Therefore, since law itself is perfect wrong,
> How can the law forbid my tongue to curse? *

Equally logical—more strikingly and terribly consequential than the cool reasonings of the Cardinal himself—are these sentences addressed to him in her despairing scene:—

> And, father cardinal, I have heard you say,
> That we shall see and know our friends in heaven.
> *If that be true,* I shall see my boy again;
> *For,* since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
> To him that did but yesterday suspire,
> There was not such a gracious creature born.
> *But* now will canker sorrow eat my bud,
> And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
> And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
> As dim and meagre as an ague's fit;
> And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
> When I shall meet him in the court of heaven,
> I shall not know him: *therefore* never, never
> Must I behold my pretty Arthur more!

Here, indeed, her heart may be said to stimulate her intellect to a sort of preternatural activity; but she does not rave, she reasons herself into the climax of despair. Yet Mrs. Jameson speaks of "the bewildered pathos and poetry of this address;" and in a subsequent page proceeds in the same strain—"It is this exceeding vivacity of imagination which in the

* The omission of this passage in acting, mutilates the developement of the intellectual part of this interesting character.

end turns sorrow to frenzy,"—and calls the sublime effusions of her despair "the frantic violence of uncontrolled feeling." This is nothing less than using to the afflicted mother the language addressed to her by the cold-blooded papal diplomatist,

> Lady, you utter madness, and not sorrow:

and Constance's own answer to the Cardinal is a triumphant refutation of all such criticism:—

> Thou art not holy, to belie me so.
> I am not mad: this hair I tear is mine;
> My name is Constance; I was Geffrey's wife;
> Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost:
> I am not mad;—I would to heaven I were!
> For then, 'tis like, I should forget myself:
> Oh, if I could, what grief should I forget!—
> Preach some philosophy to make me mad,
> And thou shalt be canóniz'd, cardinal;
> For, *being not mad*, but sensible of grief,
> *My reasonable part produces reason*
> *How I may be deliver'd of these woes*,
> And teaches me to kill or hang myself.
> *If I were mad*, I should forget my son,
> Or madly think a babe of clouts were he: *
> I am not mad; too well, too well I feel
> The different plague of each calamity!

But in spite of this convincing protest, Mrs. Jameson sees only, in the lady's invocation to Death, that she "heaps one ghastly image upon another with all the wild luxuriance of a distempered fancy":—

> O amiable, lovely death!
> Thou odoriferous stench! sound rottenness!
> Arise forth from thy couch of lasting night,
> Thou hate and terror to prosperity;
> And I will kiss thy détestable bones,
> And put my eye-balls in thy vaulty brows,
> And ring these fingers with thy household worms,
> And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
> And be a carrion monster like thyself!
> Come, grin on me, and I will think thou smil'st,
> And buss thee as thy wife! Misery's love,
> Oh, come to me!

* The omission of these eight lines in performance, is another mutilation, of the same nature as the one last-mentioned, and even more injurious.

For our own part, we can only exclaim upon this, oh! tremendous and resistless logic of high and true passion! oh, "lion sinews" lent to the intellect by the fearful pressure of despair upon the heart!

We deem it requisite to dwell a little longer upon Mrs. Jameson's general view of this matter, because the error into which she seems to us to fall respecting it, is an essential one, and pervades her criticism of Shakespeare's more poetical characters. The two following passages from this same essay of hers shall be our text:—

"In fact, it is not pride, nor temper, nor ambition, nor even maternal affection, which, in Constance, gives the prevailing tone to the whole character; it is the predominance of imagination. In the poetical, fanciful, excitable cast of her mind, in the *excess* of the ideal power, tinging all her affections, exalting all her sentiments and thoughts, and animating the expression of both, Constance can only be compared to Juliet." Again: "Some of the most splendid poetry to be met with in Shakespeare may be found in the parts of Juliet and Constance; the most splendid, perhaps, excepting only the parts of Lear and Othello; and for the same reason, that Lear and Othello as men, and Juliet and Constance as women, are distinguished by the predominance of the same faculties—passion and imagination."

Here seems to us to lie a radical error, that of regarding the "*excess* of the ideal power," the *predominance* of passion and imagination, as productive of "the most splendid poetry." For the very reason that Lear and Othello, Juliet and Constance, are sublime poets, that is, possess the creative mental power in the highest degree, neither fancy nor passion, however vigorous in them, can be predominant, but must exist in due proportion to the strength of the reasoning faculty. Otherwise, the result would be, not poetry, but mere wild, incoherent raving, such as Mrs. Jameson has mistakingly attributed to the most impassioned speeches of Constance herself.

But, as she herself protests, she is not mad; and not being mad, her most impassioned are also her most logical passages; as is ever the case with a being like her, in whom a noble nature has unfolded itself in harmonious vigour. Her glowing heart, indeed, stirred by the deepest of all passions, a widowed mother's boundless and idolatrous love, puts her rich and lively fancy into most active play; but only her bright strong intellect could mould and elevate those crowding images into glorious and deathless imaginings. Whatever the actual princess might be, *Shakespeare's* Constance is a poetess of the first order: and so, in one sense, must the actress be who undertakes to personate her. Feeling, fancy, and reason, in her soul, must each be strong, and all harmoniously blended.

This brings us to the histrionic part of our observations; and as, in the course of Mrs. Siddons's theatrical career, the Lady Constance became one of her great parts, we turn, of necessity, to the record which Mr. Campbell's Life of that great performer affords us, of what were her conception and execution of this arduous character.

The remarks, then, extracted from Mrs. Siddons's memoranda on the character of Constance, whom she designates as "the majestic, the passionate, the tender," show that she felt and appreciated the essential tenderness of the character more fully and justly than the literary critic of her own sex, from whom we have been quoting. Still we find, from a careful perusal of the great actress's observations, that the ideas of pride and majesty and command unduly predominate in her conception of the "gentle Constance." One source of this error it is important to point out. The first mention of Constance in the play speaks of her as "that ambitious Constance;" and we affirm most confidently, that there is not another syllable in the piece from which it is possible to infer ambition on her part. It is quite plain, that the indolence or carelessness of most readers—a carelessness or indolence of which we

might cite many similar examples—has caused this description of Constance to pass with them as the *dramatist's own* view of the character. But what is the fact? That these words come from the lips of Constance's deadly enemy and rival, Queen Elinor, who almost in the same breath confesses to us the fact of her and her son John's usurpation. This same essential fact, attested by their own words, leaves not the smallest scope for ambition in Constance, even supposing that the poet had, which he has not, represented her as loving power for its own sake. Surely it is no more a proof of ambition, that she desires to see her son possessed of a crown which is his birthright, than it is of covetousness for a man to desire the payment of a debt which is justly due to him. Yet we find even the acute perception of Mrs. Siddons to have been misled by the prevailing prepossession,—though, abandoning the most absurd form of it, she says, "I believe I shall not be thought singular when I assert, that though she has been designated the ambitious Constance, she has been ambitious only for her son. It was for him, and him alone, that she aspired to, and struggled for hereditary sovereignty." The same mistaken impression leads the great performer to speak repeatedly of "disappointed ambition," "baffled ambition," as among the indignant feelings of Constance at the treachery of her allies. To the same source it must surely be attri-

this interesting critic tells us at the very
r observations—"My idea of Constance is
ofty and proud spirit, associated with the
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f regarding her in the grand scene with her
protectors, as possessed by a pride *inherent*
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too predominant bitterness and asperity of tone, to Mrs. Siddons's acting of this scene, majestic and wonderful as it must have been. The sarcasms, we fear, were uttered too much in the manner of a woman *habitually* sarcastic; and she seems to have fallen somewhat into the same error which we have pointed out in Mrs. Jameson's criticism, of confounding with mere frenzy the awful poetry that bursts from the tortured heart of the heroine. "Goaded and stung," she says, "by the treachery of her faithless friends, and almost maddened by the injuries they have heaped upon her, she becomes desperate and ferocious as a hunted *tigress* in defence of her young, and it seems tnat existence itself must surely issue forth with the utterance of that *frantic* and appalling exclamation,—

A wicked day, and not a holy day! &c."

Yet Constance might more justly be likened to a hunted hind than a hunted tigress; nor should her exclamations on this occasion, however appalling, be termed frantic. In all this, the poet, ever true to nature, has observed a due gradation. Here, indeed, is grief in its utmost, its proudest intensity; but here is no despair—she is not even on the way to frenzy, as we find her to be in the scene which follows the capture of her son.

Mr. Campbell, who, in speaking of Mrs. Siddons's performance of this character, professes to have "almost as many circumstantial recollections [redacted] there are speeches in the part," and wh[redacted] enact it when ten years of practice and in[redacted] in it must have brought her performance to [redacted] perfection, relates one particular of it whi[redacted] us to exemplify very strikingly the erro[redacted] which we have indicated as warping her[redacted] respecting the essential qualities of the [redacted] "When," says her biographer, "she patted[redacted] the breast with the words, 'Thine honour! [redacted] honour!' *there was a sublimity in the laugh o[redacted] casm.*" Now, we must affirm, that anyt[redacted]

sarcastic expression of this passage is quite inconsistent with the essential character of Constance, and most inappropriate to the occasion upon which it is delivered. Here we must again insist upon the strict consequentiality and the sterling policy of the heroine's behaviour throughout this agitated scene. Her expressions of indignation and her appeals to heaven, are not only natural in themselves, but the inspiring instinct of maternal solicitude teaches her, that friendless and powerless as she is otherwise left, they are the only instruments, the only weapons, remaining to her. Her one sole chance of redress now lies in the effect which her indignant logic may yet work upon the sensibility to shame and guilt that lingers in the breasts of some at least of her selfish allies, and which, it is barely possible, may move them to recede from their last disgraceful compact. Her invocation, in itself so sublimely fervent and impressive—

> Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjur'd kings!
> A widow cries; be husband to me, heavens!
> Let not the hours of this ungodly day
> Wear out the day in peace; but, ere sunset,
> Set armed discord 'twixt these perjur'd kings!
> Hear me, O hear me!—

takes the awful character of prophecy from the almost immediate appearance of the legate, in whose mission there comes to her aid an accidental indeed, and indifferent, but a most powerful ally. She is now encouraged to strain every nerve of her intellect and her eloquence in enforcing the cardinal's denunciation against her principal oppressor, and his menace to the most potent of her treacherous friends. The dauphin, whose sense of honour, throughout the piece, is represented as more susceptible than his father's, is the first to shew signs of retracting their late political engagements. Upon this relenting emotion she eagerly lays hold; and in opposition to the entreaty of his bride, the Lady Blanch, who kneels to beg that he will not turn his arms against her uncle, makes the fervent religious adjuration—

Oh, upon *my* knee,
Made hard with kneeling, I do pray to thee,
Thou virtuous dauphin, alter not the doom
Forethought by heaven!

And to Blanch's last appeal—

Now shall I see thy love. What motive may
Be stronger with thee than the name of wife?—

she rejoins by urging triumphantly the noble moral sentiment—

That which upholdeth him that thee upholds,
His honour: oh, thine honour, Lewis, thine honour!

And on Philip's consenting to break the treaty, she concludes with the grateful exclamation—

Oh, fair return of banish'd majesty!

Where, we would ask, is the tone of *sarcasm* in all this? The slightest touch of it might have defeated the very object, dearest to her on earth, for which she was pleading, by checking and offending those "compunctious visitings" the first symptoms of which she was alert to observe and to nourish in the breasts of her unfaithful friends. *Sarcasm* from her lips, at such a moment! No, indeed—Constance, and Shakespeare, know too well what they are about.

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2. ACTING OF THE LADY CONSTANCE, QUEEN ELINOR, THE LADY BLANCH, AND LADY FAULCONBRIDGE; BY MISS HELEN FAUCIT, MISS ELLIS, MISS FAIRBROTHER, AND MRS. SELBY.

[February 18th, 1843.]

More interesting even than Mrs. Siddons's estimate of the character of Constance, are her observations on the difficulties which its personation presents to the actress, and the means which she herself so

earnestly studied and applied, to overcome them. These observations, and these efforts, while they well deserve the attention and zealous emulation of every aspirant to the representation of this arduous part, no less demand the serious consideration of every one who shall venture to criticise the performance. Let the personation of Constance be attempted by whomsoever it may, the critic should ever bear in mind these memorable words from the pen of her deceased representative:—"Her gorgeous affliction, if such an expression is allowable, is of so sublime and so intense a character, that the personation of its grandeur, with the utterance of its rapid and astonishing eloquence, almost overwhelms the mind that meditates its realization, and utterly exhausts the frame which endeavours to express its agitations." It is, then, under a deep impression of the arduousness of this character, even to the most gifted and experienced performer, and of the indulgence especially due to every young actress to whose lot it falls to assume a part so lofty, so interesting, and so difficult, that we shall offer a few remarks on the acting of the lady who now fills it on the boards of Drury-Lane, and who may fairly be regarded at present as the sole representative of Shakespeare's Lady Constance on the metropolitan stage.

What strikes us first of all in Miss Helen Faucit's personation, is, her clear and perfect conception that *feeling*, not *pride*, is the mainspring of the character; that the dignity of bearing natural to and inseparable from it, and which the advantage of a tall, graceful figure enables this actress to maintain with little effort, is at the same time an easy, unconscious dignity, quite different from that air of self-importance, that acting of majesty, which has been mistakenly ascribed to it by those who have attributed to the heroine an ambitious nature. She makes us feel throughout, not only the depth, the tenderness, and the poetry of the maternal affection, dwelling in a vivid fancy and a glowing heart; but is ever true to that "constant,

loving, noble nature," which is not more sensitive to insult from her foes and falsehood from her friends, than it is ever ready to welcome with fresh gratitude and confidence the return of better feelings in any who have injured her.

That intimate association, in short, of gracefulness with force, and of tenderness with dignity, which this lady has so happily displayed in other leading characters of Shakespeare, is her especial qualification for this arduous part—the most arduous, we believe, of all the Shakespearian female characters—for this plain reason, that while it is one of those exhibiting the highest order of powers, the range of emotions included in it is the widest, and the alternations, the fluctuations, between the height of virtuous indignation and contempt, and the softest depth of tenderness, are the most sudden and the most extreme. The principle of contrast, in fact—that great element of the romantic drama, as of all romantic art—which Shakespeare delighted to employ, not only in opposing one character to another, but in developing each character individually, is carried to the highest pitch by the trials to which the course of the dramatic incident subjects the sensitive, passionate, and poetic—the noble and vigorous nature of Constance.

Here, again, we turn, for an illustration, to Mrs. Siddons's performance of the part. It seems well established, by the concurring testimony of all who preserve distinct recollections of her acting, that on a general estimate of her tragic powers, it was in gracefully commanding *force* that she so wonderfully excelled, and in the expression of *tenderness* that she was often felt to be deficient,—a defect which must have been especially apparent in her personation of those Shakespearian characters wherein exquisite feeling is combined with extraordinary vigour. It has not surprised us, therefore, in conversing with persons on whose judgment and candour we can rely, and who have repeatedly witnessed the great actress's

representation of The Lady Constance, to find that in the passages of melting tenderness which abound in the part, a want of adequate expression was very sensibly felt. Majestic and terrible, then, as her performance of the indignant scenes undoubtedly was, yet it must have failed, for want of sufficient contrast, to derive all that startling boldness of relief which the dramatist himself has given to those electric passages.

Labouring, too, under the misconception already pointed out, as to the essential qualities of the character, it would be but natural that, in the scenes where Constance and her son stand alone, deserted and betrayed, amid their treacherous friends and their triumphant enemies, Mrs. Siddons, properly making the impulse of resentful scorn the immediate spring of her vituperation, should have failed to clear its expression wholly from her brow in those passages wherein the action requires her to turn it upon her child. We think it one of the most notable merits in the representation of the part by the lady who now personates it, that so far from letting the indignant excitement cast for one moment the slightest shade upon her brow or harshness into her tone when turning to the boy, she follows undeviatingly the poet's indication; and, in like manner as he has made the first effusion poured out by Constance on hearing her abandonment, one of maternal grief and tenderness only, so amidst her subsequent bursts of indignant reproach and fiery denunciation, in every look and word which the present actress addresses to Arthur, the afflicted mother seems to find relief from those effusions of bitterness, as repugnant to her nature as they are withering in their power, by melting into double tenderness over the beauties and misfortunes of her child.

This, we repeat, seems to us to be one of the very happiest features in Miss Faucit's personation of The Lady Constance. Thus it is, for example, that in the first scene with Elinor, she renders with such perfect truth and beauty the exquisitely characteristic passage:—

> His grandam's wrongs, and not his mother's shames,
> Draw those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes,
> Which heaven shall take in nature of a fee:
> Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be brib'd
> To do him justice, and revenge on you.

Again, in her scene with Salisbury, where Constance is informed of the peace made between the two kings, and where the emotions that agitate her are deeper and more conflicting, we can conceive nothing in acting, or in reality, more exquisitely touching than the expression which she gives to the passage,

> But thou art fair; and at thy birth, dear boy, &c.

The faltering pauses, more eloquent than the finest declamation, must have gone directly, not only to every mother's heart, but to every heart present, alive to any touch of sympathy. Indescribably sweet, too, in her utterance, are the words,—

> Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast,
> And with the half-blown rose.

In those brief accents she breathes to us all the inmost soul of Constance, the idolizing mother, delicately sensitive and richly imaginative. Nor can anything be more beautiful in itself, or more true to nature and to the poet, than the graceful fondness with which, after throwing herself on the ground in the climax of her grief, she looks up, and raises her hand to play with the ringlets of her boy as he stands drooping over her.

We must speak rather more at large of Miss Faucit's acting in the following scene, the most difficult of all in so difficult a part. Undoubtedly, the dramatist conceived of his heroine as of one endowed with the most vigorous as well as exquisite physical powers. Only such a person could rise to the adequate expression of that towering sublimity of virtuous invective and religious invocation which was indispensable to this part of his dramatic purpose. Equally certain it seems to be, that these solemnly

appealing and witheringly scornful passages, demanding, above all things, the display of what is commonly meant by *tragic force*, were the most successful parts of Mrs. Siddons's personation of The Lady Constance. Not having had the advantage of witnessing those majestic efforts of the great actress, we are not enabled to compare the force of delivery shown in those particular sentences by Mrs. Siddons and by the present actress respectively. But we *have* the means of comparing the force of execution in the present performer with what we conceive that the part itself demands, and in that view we find her personation adequate. The force which Shakespeare exhibits in the eloquence of Constance, is not the hard force of an arrogant, imperious termagant, such as we see in his Queen Elinor, but the *elastic* force that springs from a mind and person having all the vigour of a character at once so intellectual, so poetical, and so essentially feminine as that of Constance. To the expression of this highest and most genuine *tragic force* we repeat that Miss Faucit shows her powers to be not only fully equal, but peculiarly adapted. She has that truest histrionic strength, which consists in an ample share of physical power in the ordinary sense, combined with exquisite modulation of tone and flexibility of feature—by turns the firm and the varying expressiveness of figure, voice, and eye. We say this after much attentive study of her acting, especially in her Shakespearian parts; and as regards the performance of The Lady Constance in particular, how perfect soever Mrs. Siddons may have been in certain other Shakespearian characters, yet, considering her decided deficiency in tenderness, we cannot hesitate to regard the present personation of the heroine of 'King John' as truer to that spirit of bold and beautiful contrast which, we have already observed, is in the very essence of the part, as it is in that of the whole Shakespearian drama.

Thus it is that the caressing of her boy, while

seated on the ground, according to the true Shakespearian conception, at once deepens the impression of the preceding words and action which make that sublime enthronement of her grief, and gives bolder effect to her majestically indignant contradiction of the French king's speech in glorification of that "blessed day,"—

> A wicked day, and not a holy day! &c."—

and yet more to the personal invective against Philip,

> You have beguil'd me with a counterfeit
> Resembling majesty, &c.

And in like manner, her action and tone, in bending down to clasp her son, with the words—

> And our oppression hath made up this league!—

while they speak all the beautiful nature of Constance, make us the more strikingly and sublimely feel its energy when, as if drawing from her child's embrace the strongest stimulus of which the wronged and sorrowing mother is susceptible, she rises, as it were, to more than the natural height of her noble figure, and lifts high her hands to heaven in the majestic appeal—

> Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjur'd kings, &c.

It is this exaltation of the figure — this aspiring heavenward of the whole look, and tone, and gesture —that gives, and can alone give, adequate effect to the flashes of scorn that burst, in her glances and her accents, upon the despicable and devoted head of Austria, when he interrupts her invocation, in its highest fervour, with those very characteristic words of his, "Lady Constance, peace!" This it is, as given by the present actress, that makes her piercing and scorching reproaches seem to be drawn down like the forked lightnings from above, searing and blasting where they strike, and sharpened to their utmost keenness by the practical sarcasm which she

finds in the bodily aspect worn by the object of her indignation—in the "lion's hide" upon "those recreant limbs." This, in all the part, is the passage most requiring the display of physical energy—yet of an energy richly and variously modulated, as remote as possible from monotonous loudness and vehemence. Miss Faucit, in her whole manner of rendering this passage, shows how well she comprehends this distinction. By the fluctuating look and intonation,—by the hesitating pauses, at a loss for expressions adequate to the intensity of her unwonted bitterness, and giving keener force to the expressions when they come,—she makes us exquisitely feel the stung spirit of injured, betrayed, and insulted confidence and tenderness, more terrible and blighting far than that of mere exasperated pride.

And after this climax of her indignation, when the legate appears, as if sent from heaven in answer to her call, most affectingly and impressively beautiful, to our mind, is the expression of the noble nature of the heroine, which her representative gives to the kneeling appeals which Constance makes to the virtuous and religious feelings of the dauphin. Already, in speaking of Mrs. Siddons's acting of the part, we have fully expressed our opinion as to the true reading of this important passage. We have here only to add, that Miss Faucit gives that reading, as it seems to us, with admirable effect, delivering especially, with all that noble and generous fervour which, we conceive, belongs to it, the unanswerable answer to Blanch—

> That which upholdeth him that thee upholds,
> His honour; oh, thine honour, Lewis, thine honour!

It is to be regretted, that owing to the suppression, in the acting play, of that part of the dialogue which immediately follows, the last words of Constance in this scene—

> Oh fair return of banish'd majesty!—

the crowning expression of her trusting, grateful,

forgiving spirit—are nearly drowned in their delivery by the too hasty noise and bustle on the stage, of breaking up the royal conference.

We shall not attempt to speak in detail of this lady's acting in the terrible despairing scene. She renders its anguish-born poetry with a delicacy of expression yet more overpowering than its force. The looks, and tones, and gestures of a performance like this, are not things to be described, but to be seen and heard, felt and wept over. For our own part, long shall we be haunted by those accents, now piercingly, now softly thrilling—now enamoured of Death, now rushing back to the sweet and agonizing remembrance of her child, now hurrying forward to anticipate the chasing of "the native beauty from his cheek"—till her last lingering ray of hope expires, and reason totters on the verge of frenzy. All these emotions are rendered to us by the actress, in all their varied beauty and their trembling intensity. In the concluding exclamation—

> O Lord! my boy! my Arthur! my fair son!
> My life! my joy! my food! my all the world!
> My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure!—

her voice, it is true, rises almost into a scream: what, however, we would ask, are the whole three lines in themselves, but one long scream of intensest agony? The immediate effect upon the feelings of the auditor is doubtless painful, as the shricking accents are to his ear; yet both are necessary to the full dramatic force and beauty of the passage. The woes of Constance and her son are to be visited in retributive justice on their oppressors; and to sustain our interest vividly through that subsequent portion of the drama, it was requisite that the affliction of the bereaved mother should be brought home to us in its darkest and most heart-rending extreme. The poet, therefore, conducts her through every stage of desperate grief—the yearning for death—the longing for madness—the constant craving

for the presence of the boy whose image "walks up and down with her"—till this last fixed idea finally seizes, burningly and burstingly, on her brain, and consigns her, not to insanity, which, as she says, might have made her "forget her son," but to a torturing frenzy, hopeless and mortal. Of this her final state on earth, Shakespeare gives us one awful glimpse, one harrowing strain, then mercifully hurries her from our sight and hearing. An exclamation like this, then, let us repeat, in justice to the actress, can only have its due effect from being delivered, not with the harmonious modulation of tone appropriate to even the most impassioned words of Constance while her self-possession yet remains to her, but rather like the death-shriek of a spirit violently parting.

Among the other omissions in acting, we have to regret that of the lines spoken by King Philip in the middle of this scene—

> Oh, what love I note
> In the fair multitude of those her hairs!
> Where but by chance a silver drop hath fallen,
> Even to that drop ten thousand wiry friends
> Do glue themselves in sociable grief,
> Like true, inseparable, faithful loves,
> Sticking together in calamity!

These are wanted, not only for the purpose to which Shakespeare ever so diligently attended—to relieve the feelings and attention of the auditor, by breaking the continuity of the heroine's effusions of despair,—but also to give double effect to those effusions, by the impression which the exquisite poetry of this passage shows to be made by her cureless affliction, even upon the not over-feeling personages about her. The dry, cold words which are left in Philip's mouth,

> Bind up your tresses,

are a grievous falling-off. The suppression is an injury to the actress, no less than to the heroine.

Small a space as *Queen Elinor* occupies in the

dialogue of this piece, it is important to mark the clear indications which every line of it assigned to her affords us, of the character as conceived by the dramatist. Here, indeed, we have arrogance and unscrupulous love of power personified; and accordingly, her vehemence in repelling the charge of usurpation against herself and John, is proportioned to the clear consciousness which she betrays of the justice of the imputation. In her violent altercation with Constance, she makes up for the inferiority of her eloquence to that of her rival, by boldness of assertion and fierceness of reproach. Her sentences are brief, but each one of them speaks a volume respecting her own predominant qualities; and her vituperation, it must be owned, is truly imperial.

> Thou monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth!

is her answer to the beautiful words of Constance on the weeping of her son—

> His grandam's wrongs, and not his mother's shames,
> Draw those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes, &c.

But more thoroughly are the whole heart and conscience of the speaker betrayed in the exclamation—

> Out, insolent!—thy bastard shall be king,
> That thou mayst be a queen, and check the world!—

a speech most forcibly characteristic of the woman whose own youthful gallantries had given such public scandal, divorcing her from her first royal husband, and who in age had shown, that her chief solicitude to have John a king rather than Arthur, was, that she herself, ruling his political councils, might really "be a queen and check the world."

And here let us point out the art which the dramatist has used, to cast the greatest possible improbability upon the charge of conjugal infidelity brought against The Lady Constance by her insolent oppressor, no less than upon that of unlawful ambition. The striking resemblance of her son to her deceased

husband is placed repeatedly before us. King Philip, especially, in his address to John upon their first meeting, says, pointing to Arthur:—

> Look here upon thy brother Geffrey's face:
> These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his;
> This little abstract doth contain that large
> Which died in Geffrey; and the hand of time
> Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume.

Here, then, is strong countenance for Constance's own allegation in answer to Elinor:—

> My bed was ever to thy son as true
> As thine was to thy husband; and this boy
> Liker in feature to his father Geffrey,
> Than thou and John, in manners being as like
> As rain to water, or devil to his dam.

Nor, considering the established character of Elinor as a wife, and the bitterness of her slander, can we help holding Constance excusable for retorting:—

> My boy a bastard!—by my soul, I think
> His father never was so true begot;
> It cannot be, an if thou wert his mother.

We find it the more necessary to cite these sentences of Constance, because they are not heard upon the stage. The constant omission, in modern acting, of the most characteristic passages in this dialogue between her and "the mother-queen," cramps exceedingly the developement which the dramatist, in this place, has clearly, though rapidly, made of the respective moral character and position of the two personages; and has contributed to establish the prevalent notion of this scene, as a mere piece of *scolding* between two angry rivals.

The nature of the moral tie between Elinor and John—a bond much more of common interest than affection—contrasts finely, throughout the piece, with the mutual tenderness between Constance and her son. The "little prince" desires not greatness at all; and his mother desires it only for his sake. Elinor and John love power equally for its own sake: but as for personal affection, the mother-queen loves

the greatness of her son chiefly for the sway which it secures to herself; while John betrays no spark of filial, any more than he does of any other attachment. He loves everybody, even his royal mother, just after the fashion that he so vehemently protests he *loves* Hubert—that is, exactly so far as he can *use* them. Thus, in his exclamation upon hearing of Elinor's death—

> My mother dead!
> How wildly then walks my estate in France!—

we find the language, not of affection, but of sheer self-interest. Elinor, indeed, is shown here, as in history, to have been John's political genius, infusing such spirit and sagacity as had found their way into his councils; and accordingly, in the course of righteous retribution which forms the sequel of the play, the death of Elinor by the hand of heaven is made by the dramatist to follow immediately upon that brought upon Constance by maternal anguish and despair—

> The Lady Constance in a frenzy died
> Three days before.

"My mother dead!" is the exclamation we find John still repeating. Feeling the sole stay of his mean and cowardly spirit to be thus struck from him at the moment when he needed it the most, we find his resolutions thenceforward utterly paralysed; we see him staggering on from one personal and political meanness to another; abandoning wholly to his "valiant kinsman Faulconbridge" "the ordering of this present time;" and dying at last, in spite of all that kinsman's eloquent exhortations, not like a brother of Cœur-de-Lion, with harness on his back, but like a craven plunderer of monastic treasuries, with poison in his stomach.

Although, from the limited space which this character occupies in the drama, we are aware that it can seldom fall into the hands of a first-rate performer, yet it is plain, that the actress who under-

takes to personate Queen Elinor should be as *imperial-looking* as possible. Heiress to a sovereign duchy, married successively to the two most powerful monarchs of the age—Louis the Seventh of France, and Henry the Second of England,—and now brought before us in the drama as directing the councils of her royal son,—the habit no less than the love of command should be expressed in her every look and tone, as well as in all the rest of her demeanour. No approach to tenderness should be heard in her accent or read upon her brow. She should present to us that very impersonation of pride and love of sway—that *conscious* self-importance—somewhat of that "acting of majesty," as we have said before—which both critic and performer have too frequently attributed to Constance herself; although they should have seen, that the most palpable dramatic propriety requires the natural dignity of person and rank in the mother of Arthur to stand out very clearly distinguished from the arrogant dignity of her intriguing and ambitious rival.

The lady (Miss Ellis) who now enacts this part at Drury-Lane, though manifestly very young to represent a character so decidedly aged, sustains it respectably. One error which she commits as regards the business of the stage, we will point out, because it seems to us to be at once evident and easy of correction. In the scene immediately following Arthur's capture, the dramatist, it will be remembered, makes Elinor take Arthur aside, as if to leave John at liberty to confer with Hubert about the disposal of the young prince's person. And from John's words to Hubert—"Throw thine eyes on *yon*' young boy"—it is plain that the boy is meant to be taken aside to some distance on the stage. The glance of the king's eye towards him, even at the farthest corner of the stage, Shakespeare evidently and naturally thought would be regarded as intelligible enough to so confidential a servant as Hubert, even though John's desire of getting Arthur into his power had not been pretty notorious. But in the present acting, the queen-mother

does not really go *aside* at all. She remains in the front of the stage, almost in the middle of it, and so near to John and Hubert, that it is difficult to conceive of their talking together in ever so low a whisper without their being overheard by Arthur himself. To this palpable improbability is added one yet more painful to the eye and mind of the auditor. Instead of alternately bending and raising her figure, as if diverting the child's attention with some light and varied conversation, Elinor's representative remains stooping over him, and he looking up to her, in one unvaried posture, during the very considerable time occupied by the conference between Hubert and his master. There are some matters relative to arrangement and grouping on the stage, respecting which, perhaps, the auditor is better situated for judging than the manager himself. The case before us seems to be one of these, and deserving attention, since the defective arrangement here complained of can so easily be remedied, and, while it is continued, mars one of the most effective scenes of his own acting.

The Lady Blanch, occupying still less space in the piece than Queen Elinor, is one of those subordinate characters, as they are commonly called, which nevertheless demand very graceful and judicious acting. The part is in itself so slight, and yet so elegant, that we cannot help regretting to see such interest as the poet has given to it abridged by omissions in acting. The leaving out, indeed, of the beautifully descriptive lines—

> If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,
> Where should he find it fairer than in Blanch?
> If zealous love should go in search of virtue,
> Where should he find it purer than in Blanch?
> If love ambitious sought a match of birth,
> Whose veins bound richer blood than Lady Blanch?—

is one of those curtailments which, we suppose, the necessities of the stage, as regards time, now render indispensable: but we can hardly admit any such plea as an excuse for omitting the short pathetic speech of Blanch herself, when her heart is torn

asunder, as it were, by the fresh rupture which takes place between her husband's party and her uncle's, even on her bridal day:—

> The sun 's o'ercast with blood. Fair day, adieu!
> Which is the side that I must go withal?
> I am with both: each army hath a hand;
> And in their rage, I having hold of both,
> They whirl asunder, and dismember me!
> Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
> Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
> Father, I may not wish the fortune thine;
> Grandam, I will not wish thy wishes thrive;
> Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose;
> Assured loss, before the match be play'd!
> *Lewis.* Lady, with me—with me thy fortune lies.
> *Blanch.* There where my fortune lives, there my life dies!

To suppress this passage, is to destroy the chief point of tragic interest about the character of Blanch, which consists in vividly showing her as the victim, in her torn feelings, of the triumph of political over domestic considerations.

Miss Fairbrother is playing what is left of this part *prettily;* that is, she *looks* pretty in it, for she cannot look otherwise. It would be well, however, if she could so far imagine herself to be the high-blooded "daughter of Spain," as to throw more dignity into her air and her delivery—that same graceful majesty in *carrying the head* is so very, very hard to acquire.

As for the few sentences that have to be spoken in "Lady Faulconbridge," they are delivered, perhaps, as adequately by Mrs. Selby as they would be by any other lady. We will only venture to suggest, that, in any case, the dramatist's conception of Philip Faulconbridge's mother, must have been of a lady whose personal charms might at some time have done honour to the choice of Richard Cœur-de-Lion. We say this, be it well observed, without at all presuming to raise the delicate question as to how far the present Lady Faulconbridge fulfils this condition. It is just one of those points whereupon each auditor must be left to judge for himself.

III.

CHARACTERS IN 'CYMBELINE.'

1. IMOGEN AND POSTHUMUS.

[March 11th, 1843.]

THE true subject of 'Cymbeline' is, the trial of heroic affection in the bosom of a wife, and its triumph, not only wrought in the deepest sympathies of mankind at large, but in the fortunes of the heroine herself,—a triumph, not merely over all the worst adversities,—not merely over the most cruel doubts and suspicions conjured up by diabolical art in the breast of a noble-spirited husband,—but, more glorious far, over the disbelief in all conjugal virtue, held and professed by a voluptuary of the first order in refinement and accomplishment.

In bringing ourselves to feel, as well as understand, the character of any one of Shakespeare's more ideal heroines, we should begin with considering the very form and sound of her name; for in them we shall commonly find the key-note, as it were, to the whole rich piece of harmony developed in her person, language, sentiments, and conduct. In the present instance, resolving to give, in one delightful being, "a local habitation and a name" to

> . . . all the qualities that man
> Loves woman for, besides that hook of wiving,
> Fairness which strikes the eye,—

resolving to give to that sweet ideal of feminine excellence all possible prominence and elevation, by combining it with, and making it proof against, the possession of the most exalted rank,—it would seem as if the very revolving in his mind of this intended quintessence of feminine beauty and dignity, physical, moral, and intellectual, had caused his inmost and most exquisite spirit to breathe out spontaneously the name of *Imogen*—a word all nobleness and sweetness, all classic elegance and romantic charm. "Sweet Imogen," ever and anon, throughout this drama, comes delicately on our ear, even as the softest note swept fitfully from an Æolian lyre. And as "her breathing perfumes the chamber," even so does her spirit lend fragrance, and warmth, and purity, and elevation, to the whole body of this nobly romantic play.

Her personal beauty is of a character which so speaks the beauties of her soul,—her mental loveliness so perfectly harmonizes with her outward graces,—that it is difficult, nay impossible, to separate them in our contemplation. In this case, most transcendently, do we find the spirit moulding the body, the sentiment shaping the manner, after its own image, even to the most delicate touches. This meets our apprehension at once, even if we look upon her with the eyes of Iachimo, the unsentimental though very tasteful eyes of the elegant voluptuary and accomplished connoisseur. It was not her external charms alone, however peerless, that could daunt a man like him; it was the heavenly spirit beaming through them at every point.

> All of her that is out of door, most rich!
> If she be furnish'd with a mind so rare,
> She is alone the Arabian bird, and I
> Have lost the wager. Boldness be my friend!
> Arm me, audacity, from head to foot!
> Or, like the Parthian, I shall flying fight;
> Rather, directly fly.

His rapturous commendations of her beauty that follow in the same scene, might, indeed, be set down

to the account of deliberate and designing flattery; yet we cannot but feel, that the enthusiastic language in which they are expressed, could be inspired, in a man of his character, only by a sincere perception of the most exquisite loveliness, adorned with such "neat excellence":—

> Had I this cheek
> To bathe my lips upon; this hand, whose touch,
> Whose every touch, would force the feeler's soul
> To the oath of loyalty; this object, which
> Takes prisoner the wild motion of mine eye,
> Fixing it only here, &c.

At all events, his exclamations over her in the sleeping scene must be regarded as a disinterested homage to her soul-illumined charms, the power of which detains him, in admiration, even from his perilous task of noting the decorations of her chamber:—

> Cytherea,
> How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! — fresh lily!
> And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!
> But kiss—one kiss! — Rubies unparagon'd,
> How dearly they do 't! — 'Tis her breathing that
> Perfumes the chamber thus! The flame o' the taper
> Bows toward her; and would under-peep her lids,
> To see the enclosed lights, now canopied
> Under these windows — white and azure, lac'd
> With blue of heaven's own tinct! . . . .
> . . . . . On her left breast
> A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
> I' the bottom of a cowslip!

Was ever the victory of silent beauty, elegance, and purity, over the awe-struck spirit of a sensualist, so exquisitely painted or so nobly celebrated as in these lines! It is not "the flame o' the taper" that here "bows toward her," but the unhallowed flames in a voluptuary and a treacherous breast, that render extorted yet grateful homage to that lovely, spotless, and fragrant soul!

This passage exhibits to us the beauty of Imogen surrounded by all its appropriate feminine adornments, amid the elegancies of a court, like the rose yet blooming in her native garden. How charmingly

do the words of Pisanio, when instructing her how to assume her male disguise, prepare us for the contemplation of the same sweet flower, drooping and faded in the wilderness!—

> Nay, you must
> Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,
> Exposing it (but oh, the harder heart!
> Alack, no remedy!) to the greedy touch
> Of common-kissing Titan; and forget
> Your laboursome and dainty trims, wherein
> You made great Juno angry!*

How romantically pleasing the change from the Italian voluptuary's image of the sleeping Cytherea, to the British outlaw's expressions:—

> But that it eats our victuals, I should think
> Here were a fairy. . . . . .
> By Jupiter, an angel! or, if not,
> An earthly paragon! — Behold divineness
> No elder than a boy!

Yet how identical the spirit of beauty that calls forth the exclamations of two so very different admirers! How exquisite, again, the contrast, at once, and analogy, between Iachimo's description of the "fresh lily, and whiter than the sheets," and that given us by Belarius and his two youths, of their "sweetest, fairest lily," the seemingly dead Fidele!—

> *Belarius.* How found you him?
> *Arviragus.* Stark, as you see;
> Thus smiling, as some fly had tickled slumber;
> Not as Death's dart being laugh'd at; his right cheek
> Reposing on a cushion.
> *Guiderius.* Where?
> *Arv.* O' the floor;
> His arms thus leagu'd: I thought he slept, and put
> My clouted brogues from off my feet, whose rudeness
> Answer'd my steps too loud.
> *Gui.* Why, he but sleeps.
> If he be gone, he'll make his grave a bed;
> With female fairies will his tomb be haunted,*
> And worms will not come to him!

* This passage forms one of the dramatic no less than poetic beauties which seem needlessly suppressed in the present acting.

Arv. With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave: thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose; nor
The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, which, not to slander,
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath!

Exquisite sweetness and harmony of *voice*, again, were not to be forgotten by Shakespeare among the endowments for such a heroine—so fondly conceived a type of feminine perfection. How finely is the idea of this gift of hers conveyed to us in the simple exclamation of Cymbeline on hearing the first words that she utters on reviving after Posthumus has struck her—

The *tune* of Imogen!

And Pisanio, when instructing her how to present herself in disguise before Lucius, the Roman commander, says to her,—

Tell him
Wherein you are happy—which you'll make him know,
If that his head have ear in music.

And Arviragus tells us of Fidele—

How angel-like he sings!

The words of Guiderius immediately following this observation of his brother's, are remarkable in two respects. They shew the graceful propriety with which the poet could ascribe to his ideal princess a familiarity with the most ordinary branches of domestic economy; and exhibit at the same time the inimitable art wherewith he could lend ideal dignity to one of the homeliest qualifications;—

But his neat cookery! He cut our roots in characters;
And sauc'd our broths, *as Juno had been sick,*
And he her dieter.

Even her "foolish suitor," the booby coxcomb Cloten, is made sensible that

She hath all courtly parts more exquisite
Than lady, ladies, woman: from every one

> The best she hath; and she, of all compounded,
> Outsells them all.

That the moral and intellectual beauty of his heroine are conceived by the dramatist to be as ideally exalted as her personal graces, we must proceed to shew, by fully examining those relations between her and the principal hero, Leonatus Posthumus, which form the nucleus of the story. It is the more indispensable to do this, because a critic of so much authority as Hazlitt has told his readers, in speaking of Imogen, that "Posthumus is only interesting from the interest she takes in him; and she is only interesting herself from her tenderness and constancy to her husband;"—which is equivalent to saying, that Imogen is interesting to us only because she is herself interested for a man who does not deserve it. How grievous an abasement is here made of the real conception which the dramatist exhibits of both characters—more especially that of the heroine,—a little close attention to the developement of the drama itself will discover most convincingly. In order to judge aright respecting the dignity of Imogen's love—to see whether, in directing her choice, her intellect had not an equal share with her heart—we must, of necessity, first of all consider the personal qualities wherewith the poet has distinctly and emphatically endowed his hero.

We first hear of him, from the introductory information given by one of the courtiers to some enquiring visitor, as "a poor but worthy gentleman." The same speaker terms him

> . . . a creature such
> As, to seek through the regions of the earth
> For one his like, there would be something failing
> In him that should compare. I do not think,
> So fair an outward, and such stuff within,
> Endows a man but he.

We are not, however, left to judge of him from these general though decided commendations: the same impartial narrator thus gives us his history and character in full:—

> His father
> Was call'd Sicilius, who did join his banner,
> Against the Romans, with Cassibelan;
> But had his titles by Tenantius, whom
> He serv'd with glory and admir'd success;
> So gain'd the sur-addition Leonatus:
> And had, besides this gentleman in question,
> Two other sons, who in the wars o' the time,
> Died with their swords in hand; for which their father
> (Then old and fond of issue) took such sorrow,
> That he quit being; and his gentle lady,
> Big of this gentleman, our theme, deceas'd
> As he was born. The king, he takes the babe
> To his protection; calls him Posthumus;
> Breeds him, and makes him of his bedchamber;
> Puts to him all the learnings that his time
> Could make him the receiver of; which he took
> As we do air, fast as 'twas minister'd; and
> In his spring became a harvest: liv'd in court
> (Which rare it is to do) most prais'd, most lov'd;
> A sample to the youngest; to the more mature,
> A glass that feated them; and to the graver,
> A child that guided dotards: to his mistress,
> For whom he now is banish'd,—*her own price*
> *Proclaims how she esteem'd him and his virtue;*
> *By her election may be truly read*
> *What kind of man he is.*

The poet, we see, takes good care to let us know, at the very outset, that his heroine has made the *wisest* as well as the most generous and most amorous choice of a husband—that, without forgetting the princess, she has chosen as a noble and cultivated woman—making personal merit in her lover the *first* consideration; and that she has not been mistaken, for that all the world confirm her judgment. We may, then, take Imogen's own word for it, when afterwards, in describing her husband's person, she talks of

> His foot Mercurial, and his Martial thigh;
> The brawns of Hercules; and his Jovial face,—

epithets which inevitably remind us of those words of Hamlet—

> A combination and a form, indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.

And we see that she is thoroughly justified in saying to her father,—

> Sir,
> It is your fault that I have lov'd Posthumus:
> You bred him as my play-fellow; and he is
> A man worth any woman.

The opening conversation had already informed the auditor that everybody, except her stepmother and the foolish prince her suitor, regarded Imogen as being in the right, and her father in the wrong—

> He that hath miss'd the princess, is a thing
> Too bad for bad report.

Imogen herself, then, may well speak as she does in the following dialogue:—

> *Cym.* That might'st have had the sole son of my queen!
> *Imo.* O bless'd, that I might not! I chose an eagle,
> And did avoid a puttock.
> *Cym.* Thou took'st a beggar; would'st have made my throne
> A seat for baseness.
> *Imo.* No — I rather added
> A lustre to it!

Indeed, she has not only all the good feeling, but all the right reasoning, on her side.

The brief experience which the dramatist gives us of the words and behaviour of Posthumus before his departure into exile, maintains this character; yet, even in these opening scenes, we find indications of that superior *harmony* of qualities in Imogen over her husband—that steady intellect, ever beaming serenely (as has been somewhere said of Heloise) over even the darkest and most troublous agitations of passion and affection in her breast—which we find developed in the course of her following eventful story.

The conduct of Posthumus in his exile has commonly been taxed with gross impropriety in making the wager with Iachimo respecting the virtue of his wife, and with rash credulity in accepting the Italian's own account of the success of his experiment. These combined imputations tend so seriously to lower the dignity of Posthumus's character, and, by implication, to impugn the judgment of Imogen as

regards her exalted estimation of him, that in justice to the dramatist, who has not escaped censure in the matter, we must at once proceed to examine how far the charges against him on this account are really grounded.

In Shakespeare's time, Italian craft was no less proverbial in England than Italian voluptuousness. The character of Iachimo is a sort of compound of the Roman epicureanism of the Augustan age, in which the story is laid, with the Machiavellianism in domestic as well as public life which prevailed in Italy in the dramatist's own day. Now, the character of the noble British exile is made by Shakespeare to present, in both these points, a perfect contrast, being distinguished by purity of manners and open directness of conduct. Iachimo himself, in his confessing scene, places this contrast emphatically before us;—

> A nobler sir ne'er liv'd
> 'Twixt sky and ground. . . . . .
> . . . . . The good Posthumus
> (What should I say?—he was too good to be
> Where ill men were; and was the best of all
> Amongst the rar'st of good ones)—sitting sadly,
> Hearing us praise our loves of Italy
> For beauty that made barren the swell'd boast
> Of him that best could speak;—for feature, laming
> The shrine of Venus, or straight-pight Minerva,
> Postures beyond brief nature; for condition,
> A shop of all the qualities that man
> Loves woman for; besides that hook of wiving,
> Fairness which strikes the eye: . . . .
> . . . . . This Posthumus
> (Most like a noble lord in love, and one
> That had a royal lover) took his hint;
> And, not dispraising whom we prais'd (therein
> He was as calm as virtue), he began
> His mistress' picture, which by his tongue being made,
> And then a mind put in't, either our brags
> Were crack'd of kitchen trulls, or his description
> Prov'd us unspeaking sots. . . . . .
> Your daughter's chastity—there it begins!—
> He spake of her as Dian had hot dreams,
> And she alone were cold: whereat I, wretch!
> Made scruple of his praise, and wager'd with him
> Pieces of gold, 'gainst this which then he wore

Upon his honour'd finger, to attain
In suit the place of his bed, and win this ring
By hers and mine adultery.

To estimate the shock which the mind and feelings of this "noble lord in love, and one that had a royal lover," must have received from his first encounter with the bold-faced Italian libertine, let us revert for a moment to those exquisite parting scenes whose impression was freshest of all in his heart. Their finest, sweetest spirit is breathed in those concluding lines of Imogen, which it is no more possible to grow weary of citing or of reading, than it is to tire of hearing the repeated notes of the nightingale:—

I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say. Ere I could tell him
How I would think on him at certain hours,
Such thoughts and such; or I could make him swear
The shes of Italy should not betray
Mine interest, and his honour; or have charg'd him,
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
To encounter me with orisons, for then
I am in heaven for him; or ere I could
Give him that parting kiss which I had set
Betwixt two charming words;—comes in my father,
And, like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
Shakes all our buds from growing!

Shall it be said, we may ask by the way, that a heroine who can so think, and feel, and speak, is interesting *only* from her affectionate constancy to her husband—that she has no intellectual charms inherent and independent of any affection whatsoever, notwithstanding that affection stimulates their most beautiful developement? On the other hand, how must the man who had enjoyed the glorious fortune to be brought up with such a being as his "playfellow," and now to have her as his newly wedded wife,—whose sole intercourse with the sex had been at once so virtuous and so delicious,—have been startled and irritated by the notions and sentiments which he heard put forth by the unscrupulous though elegantly cultivated man of the world, whose experience of the sex, though otherwise miscellaneous,

had been exclusively among the vicious. What a transition, good heavens! from the fragrant outpouring of the soul of Imogen, to Iachimo's "If you buy ladies' flesh at a million a dram, you cannot prevent it from tainting."

The truth is, that Posthumus, under the first shock and provocation of this revolting encounter, behaves both modestly and patiently—"as calm as virtue," according to Iachimo's penitent admission. He does not propose the wager: it is forced upon him by the scoffs and taunts of the Italian; and is accepted at last with a view to punish them,—first, by the repulse which his addresses are sure to sustain,—secondly, by the loss of his property,—and thirdly, by the duel which is to follow. They who have so violently objected against the husband's procedure on this occasion, have judged of it according to the cool, calculating habits of feeling belonging to the modern time,—ignorant of, or overlooking, the real character of that chivalric love, that truly religious faith and devotion of the heart, which Shakespeare found it here his business to paint. Iachimo, in his repentance, gives the right version of the matter;—for, according to the code of chivalry, so far from its being regarded as an insult and profanation on the husband's part, to permit such an experiment to be made upon the constancy of his wife, it was looked upon as the highest proof of his confidence in her virtue, and therefore as the most decided homage he could pay to it; and the attempting seducer, in such a case, was afterwards to be called to account by the husband, not so much for the attempt itself, as for the *disbelief* in the lady's fidelity, which it implied. Therefore says Iachimo,—

> He, *true knight*,
> No lesser of her honour confident
> Than I did truly find her, stakes this ring;
> And would so had it been a carbuncle
> Of Phœbus' wheel; and might so safely, had it
> Been all the worth of his car.

This account, which absolves Posthumus from impropriety and rashness in this proceeding, is given, let us remember, by the same accomplished man of the world who, but that he is stricken with remorse, has every interest in representing him as much as possible to have been in the wrong. In the present instance, too, it must be borne in mind, that the lady is a princess, surrounded by all the personal safeguards of a court, and therefore secure against there being offered to her the slightest personal violence.

So far concerning Posthumus's wager and his challenge. In another paper we shall speak of his character as shown in the course of his deception, his despair, his revenge, and his repentance.

2.—POSTHUMUS AND IACHIMO.

[March 18th, 1843.]

THEY who are disposed to regard the dramatist as making Posthumus shew foolish credulity, in allowing himself to be convinced of his wife's infidelity by the evidence which Iachimo adduces, should attend to the sequel of that confession, from Iachimo's own lips, of which, in our preceding paper, we have cited the former part. Still addressing Cymbeline, he says:—

> Away to Britain
> Post I in this design. Well may you, sir,
> Remember me at court, where I was taught
> Of your chaste daughter the wide difference
> 'Twixt amorous and villanous. Being thus quench'd
> Of hope, not longing, mine Italian brain
> 'Gan in your duller Britain operate
> Most vilely—for my 'vantage, excellent, &c.

The sentence,

> Mine Italian brain
> 'Gan in your duller Britain operate,

shews us clearly the spirit in which the dramatist conceived the relation here subsisting between the deceiver and the deceived. He treats it as one illustration of the grand contrast presumed to exist between the open frankness of the British character and the subtle guile of the Italian. It is no defect of judgment in Posthumus, but the superabundance of craft in Iachimo, that is made to work this false conviction in the husband's mind. What says Iachimo himself on this point?—

> My practice so prevail'd,
> That I return'd with simular proof enough
> To make the noble Leonatus mad,
> By wounding his belief in her renown
> With tokens thus, and thus; averring notes
> Of chamber-hanging, pictures, this her bracelet
> (Oh, cunning, how I got it!),—nay, some marks
> Of secret on her person,—that *he could not*
> *But think* her bond of chastity quite crack'd,
> I having ta'en the forfeit.

So, in the chamber scene itself, he had anticipated the irresistibleness of these evidences. Taking off the bracelet, he says:—

> 'Tis mine; and this will witness outwardly,
> *As strongly as the conscience does within,*
> To the madding of her lord. On her left breast
> A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
> I' the bottom of a cowslip: here's a voucher
> Stronger than ever law could make: this secret
> Will *force* him think I have pick'd the lock, and ta'en
> The treasure of her honour.

The same prevalent idea, as to the superiority of Italian cunning, appears in Imogen's exclamation to Pisanio, on their way to Milford-haven—

> My husband's hand!
> That drug-damn'd Italy hath *out-craftied* him,
> And he's at some hard point!—

as also in Pisanio's words to her—

> It cannot be,
> But that my master is abus'd:
> Some villain, ay, and *singular in his art*,
> Hath done you both this cursed injury.

To shew that, in fact, Iachimo has been elaborately delineated by the poet as a villain most "singular in his art," becomes requisite, in order to place the character and conduct of Posthumus in a light perfectly just and true.

In the banquet scene, indeed, wherein they first become acquainted, only one side of the Italian's character is brought out — the easy and familiar assurance of the libertine man of the world, sceptical as to all merit in men, and incredulous regarding feminine virtue. It is in his opening scene with Imogen that the powers of insinuation and deceit possessed by this "noble gentleman of Rome" begin to unfold themselves. Certain it is, that his very first glance at the princess whose virtue he has undertaken to assail, gives him an impression such as he has never before received from woman; and herein we find one of the master-strokes by which the poet exalts the ideal perfection of his heroine:—

> All of her that is out of door, most rich!
> If she be furnish'd with a mind so rare,
> She is alone the Arabian bird, and I
> Have lost the wager.

Already, indeed, his spirit quails before "the sun-clad power of chastity;" and he feels that the enterprise he has engaged in calls for all, and more than all, the resources of that *artful* and *tasteful* eloquence wherewith the poet has so exquisitely endowed him:—

> Boldness, be my friend!
> Arm me, audacity, from head to foot!
> Or, like the Parthian, I shall flying fight;
> Rather, directly fly.

Yet, be it remembered, he has the advantage of that strongest of all possible recommendations to the good-will and the confidence of Imogen, that he bears to her the first letters she receives from her banished

lord, and in them is commended to her by his own hand as "one of the noblest note, to whose kindnesses I am most infinitely tied. Reflect upon him accordingly, as you value your truest Leonatus." Well may she tell him, then,—

> You are as welcome, worthy sir, as I
> Have words to bid you; and shall find it so,
> In all that I can do.

How exquisite a masterpiece of insidious oratory do we find in his ensuing addresses! There is, first, the engaging her curiosity and attention by the acting of abstracted astonishment—"What! are men mad?" &c.;—then, the giving her to understand that he is occupied with a comparison between herself and some absent lady—

> It cannot be i' the eye; for apes and monkeys,
> 'Twixt two such shes, &c.—

then, the vague insinuation—

> The cloyed will,
> That satiate yet unsatisfied desire, &c.—

until Imogen's question—

> Continues well my lord?—his health, beseech you?—

informs him that he has succeeded in rousing in her breast obscure apprehension concerning her husband. Then, we see the dexterity with which he touches this tender string, her anxiety for her husband's health and cheerfulness, till he makes his account of her lord's mirthful humour so naturally introduce the sentence wherein he attributes to him exactly one of his own voluptuary sentiments:—

> *O!*
> *Can my sides hold, to think that man—who knows,*
> *By history, report, or his own proof,*
> *What woman is, yea, what she cannot choose*
> *But must be—will his free hours languish for*
> *Assured bondage!*

Then comes his "pity" for them both;—next, his more direct insinuation of her husband's infidelity—

Had I this cheek
To bathe my lips upon, . . .
. . . . . should I (damn'd then!)
Slaver with lips as common as the stairs
That mount the Capitol, ...
. . . . . it were fit
That all the plagues of hell should at one time
Encounter such revolt!

To which she makes the beautifully characteristic answer—

My lord, I fear,
Has forgot Britain.

Up to this point the insinuator is successful, his suggestions appearing only in the guise of involuntary and undesigning exclamations. But in the very next sentence he begins to get out of his depth, and awaken her suspicions of him, by assailing her with direct flattery; and beautiful it is to watch the light, as to his true character, breaking more and more upon her mind. When he says—

Not I,
Inclin'd to this intelligence, pronounce
The beggary of his change; but 'tis your graces
That, from my mutest conscience to my tongue,
Charms this report out,—

she answers, "Let me hear no more." But it is only in order that she should hear more, that he has told her so much already. He proceeds, according to her own expression, to "expound his beastly mind" to her, and so stands revealed in his true colours. When he first says, "Be revenged," he staggers the belief of her husband's inconstancy, into which he had betrayed her:—

If this be true,
(As I have such a heart, that both mine ears
Must not in haste abuse,)—if it be true,
How should I be reveng'd?

And when he arrives at the full disclosure of his object—

I dedicate myself to your sweet pleasure, &c.—

how glorious is the flashing of the whole truth on her pure heart and her unclouded intellect:—

Away! I do condemn mine ears, that have
So long attended thee. If thou wert honourable,
Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not
For such an end thou seek'st, as base as strange.
Thou wrong'st a gentleman, who is as far
From thy report as thou from honour; and
Solicit'st here a lady, that disdains
Thee and the devil alike!

Our "false Italian," however, though repulsed and defeated, is not a whit disconcerted. His scheme of seduction, indeed, is extinguished; but in his "Italian brain," he has another scheme in reserve. The half of his estate to save,—the diamond to win,—his reputation for gallantry to sustain,—and a perilous duel to avoid;—these are powerful incentives to a man with little conscience. He, therefore, loses no time in making his peace with the lady; and with what admirable tact and self-possession does he apply the most delicate flattery to her admiration and affection for her husband:—

O happy Leonatus! I may say,
The credit that thy lady hath of thee
Deserves thy trust; and thy most perfect goodness
Her assur'd credit. Blessed live you long!
A lady to the worthiest sir that ever
Country call'd his! and you, his mistress, only
For the most worthiest fit! Give me your pardon.
I have spoke this to know if your affiance
Were deeply rooted; and shall make your lord
That which he is, new o'er; and he is one
The truest manner'd, such a holy witch,
That he enchants societies unto him;
Half all men's hearts are his.
Imo. You make amends.
Iach. He sits 'mongst men like a descended god:
He hath a kind of honour sets him off,
More than a mortal seeming. Be not angry,
Most mighty princess, that I have adventur'd
To try your taking of a false report; which hath
Honour'd with confirmation your great judgment
In the election of a sir so rare,
Which you know cannot err. The love I bear him
Made me to fan you thus; but the gods made you,
Unlike all others, chaffless. Pray, your pardon.
Imo. All's well, sir. Take my power i'the court for yours.

Then, harping on the same string, the interest that her lord has in the matter, follows his request, to have his trunk of pretended valuables taken under her protection; and her voluntary undertaking to keep it in her chamber.

That same bedchamber scene is surely one of the things most exquisitely conceived amongst all the exquisite conceptions of the Shakespearian drama. The involuntary homage rendered by sacrilegious villany to the very purity which it is plotting to slander, is imagined, not only in the highest poetical, but in the most powerfully dramatic spirit. Iachimo's exclamation—

> Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here!—

embodies the essence of the scene.

How admirably, too, both in this scene, and in the following one with Posthumus and Philario, are we shown the intimate combination, in this character, of the elegant voluptuary with the crafty deceiver; from which association results that self-possessed and insinuating eloquence with which this personage is so peculiarly gifted, and which we find exerted with art no less consummate in deluding the husband than it has been in attempting the seduction of the wife.

Let us note the artful gradation by which he proceeds to lead the Briton to this false conviction. First of all, the letters he delivers to Posthumus prove, that notwithstanding the speediness of his return, he has really visited the British court and the princess. Then comes his tastefully critical account of the decorations of her chamber,—the tapestry,—the chimney-piece,—the ceiling,—the andirons,—becoming more and more close and particular, until Posthumus after telling him at first,

> And this you might have heard of here, by me,
> Or by some other,

is led on to the admission,

> Let it be granted, *you have seen all this*, &c.;

and is so prepared by the belief that Iachimo, a

events, has actually had an opportunity of leisurely surveying the interior of his wife's bedchamber, to receive the full effect of his discovery of the bracelet.

Let us mark the subtlety of art with which this discovery is managed. Iachimo gives Posthumus at first, not the full view of it, but only a hasty and imperfect glimpse:—

> I beg but leave to air this jewel.—See!—
> And now 'tis up again.—It must be married
> To that your diamond.—I'll keep them.

The agitating effect of that glimpse upon the feelings of the husband can only be estimated by calling to mind, as he must instantly have done, the moment when he had last beheld the jewel in question, in that exquisite parting scene which had passed between himself and Imogen:—

> *Post.* Should we be taking leave
> As long a term as yet we have to live,
> The loathness to depart would grow. Adieu!
> *Imo.* Nay, stay a little:
> Were you but riding forth to air yourself,
> Such parting were too petty. Look here, love,
> This diamond was my mother's: take it, heart;
> But keep it till you woo another wife,
> When Imogen is dead.
> *Post.* How! how! another!
> You gentle gods, give me but this I have,
> And seal up my embracements from a next
> With bonds of death! Remain, remain thou here,
> [*Putting on the ring.*
> While sense can keep it on! And, sweetest, fairest,
> As I my poor self did exchange for you
> To your so infinite loss, so in our trifles
> I still win of you. For my sake wear this;
> It is a manacle of love; I'll place it
> Upon this fairest prisoner.
> [*Putting the bracelet on her arm.*
> *Imo.* Oh, the gods!
> When shall we see again!

[redacted]at, then, must be the agonizing tumult of emotion [redacted]ed in the exiled husband's breast by the momen- suspense into which this gesture of Iachimo's [redacted]vs him, as to the identity of the bracelet which

he sees in his possession! For the moment his whole soul is absorbed in *ascertaining* that identity:—

> Jove!—
> Once more let me behold it!—Is it that
> Which I left with her?

It is this absorbed attention, skilfully designed by his deceiver, and his stunning astonishment on the complete discovery of the fact, that leave his mind utterly unguarded, to receive quite passively Iachimo's artfully natural account of the acquisition:—

> Sir (I thank her), that:
> She stripp'd it from her arm—I see her yet—
> Her pretty action did outsell her gift,
> And yet enrich'd it, too: she gave it me, and said
> She priz'd it once.

And now the impostor has so far beguiled his victim as to make him absolutely *see* "the pretty action" delivering up the consecrated jewel, and feel as if he had no resource but to suppose she had intended it to be conveyed to himself—

> May be, she pluck'd it off
> To send it me.

And now that he has once admitted the idea of her having given it with her own hand, he is fast in the clutch of the fiend. Iachimo clenches his conviction by the simple rejoinder,

> She writes so to you, doth she?—

thus turning the very heralds of her love into the most damning testimonies of her falsehood; so that in most logical consequence does Posthumus exclaim,—

> Oh, no, no, no; 'tis true! Here, take this too;
> [*Giving the ring.*
> It is a basilisk unto mine eye,
> Kills me to look on't!

His bias is now taken; he listens but faintly to his friend Philario's suggestion, that the bracelet may have been lost or stolen; and abandons it entirely on Iachimo's exclaiming, "By Jupiter! I had it from her arm:"—

> Hark you, he swears! by Jupiter he swears! &c.

Indeed, it should here be borne in mind, that this form of obtestation, in the age and country wherein this scene is laid, was a very different matter from swearing "by Jove" now-a-days: the oath by the father of the gods had a real and awful solemnity: and it is worthy of remark, that the dramatist, with subtle propriety, has made even the unscrupulous Iachimo employ it only this once, and in support of an assertion which, though not substantially, is literally *true*, "I had it from her arm."

When Posthumus has hurried on to his conclusion, and given him the ring—

> There, take thy hire; and all the fiends of hell
> Divide themselves between you!—

his Italian deceiver, like a perfect master of his art, seeing his dupe's imagination thoroughly on fire, thinks it worth his while to "make assurance double sure" by casting a little more fuel on the flame; describing to him the "mole, right proud of that most delicate lodging," and still asking, "Will you hear more?"—until the unhappy husband is maddened into exclaiming,—

> I will kill thee, if thou dost deny
> Thou hast made me cuckold!

It is worth observing, too, regarding the question as to the reasonableness of Posthumus's conviction, that his own Italian friend Philario acquiesces in it at last, by saying to Iachimo "you have won."

Once arrived at this point, all the rage, despair, and desire of revenge, that we find bursting from the lips of the miserable husband, are intelligible enough. And here we must observe, how seriously the acting play is mutilated by entirely omitting that soliloquy of Posthumus which immediately follows. Shakespeare's dramatic purpose in it is evident and essential —to lay clearly open to us that stormy desolation, those volcanic heavings of a noble heart, our full conception of which can alone make us tolerate the purpose of sanguinary vengeance which is to be

formed and pursued by his hero. That Elysian prospect of life which had opened to his view through the rich and roseate light of a noble and a happy love, is, by one dread thunderburst, darkened and devastated. By the force of contrast, the hell that now surrounds him calls up in more maddening brightness the smiling image of the heaven he has lost. Yet even here, from the very gulf of torture, the dramatist, in all his matchless and exquisite might, has drawn forth a tribute, the proudest and most delicate, to that purity and dignity of the very voluptuousness of virtuous love, which give the crowning charm to the interest of this delightful drama. No spirit less noble or less refined than that of Shakespeare himself, could have made the suffering husband's ruminations, on such an occasion, serve to cast the loveliest tints of all over the purity of Imogen—dewy and pearly—even as a reflection from the scarf of Iris on the bosom of Venus:—

> Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd,
> And pray'd me, oft, forbearance: did it with
> A pudency so rosy, the sweet view on't
> Might well have warm'd old Saturn; that I thought her
> As chaste as unsunn'd snow!

Then the fierce contrast into which his imagination runs, as is ever the case when early faith in moral beauty is thus violently overthrown—

> This yellow Iachimo, in an hour—was't not?
> Or less—at first. Perchance he spake not, &c.—

all terminating in that fine tirade against the sex, which might serve as a standing text for all that amiable class of writers who are disposed to pen formal satires against feminine frailty, and contrasts so strikingly with the quiet answer which, in the banquet scene, he had given to Iachimo's assertion of what he "durst attempt against any lady in the world,"—"You are a great deal abused in too bold a persuasion:" this is the man who is now worked up into telling us:—

Could I find out
The woman's part in me! For there's no motion
That tends to vice in man, but I affirm
It is the woman's part. Be it lying, note it,
The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
Nice longings, slanders, mutability,
All faults that may be nam'd, nay, that hell knows,
Why, hers in part, or all; but rather, all;
For, even to vice
They are not constant, but are changing still
One vice but of a minute old, for one
Not half so old as that. *I'll write against them,*
Detest them, curse them. Yet 'tis greater skill
In a true hate, to pray they have their will—
The very devils cannot plague them better!

But this, in the maddened husband, is the bitterness of mere despair; and the personal revenge which he meditates should, in this and all such cases, be regarded less as a murder than as a part of suicide. What says he in writing to his servant? "Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the strumpet in my bed; the testimonies whereof *lie bleeding in me.* I speak not out of weak surmises; from proof *as strong as my grief,* and as certain as I expect my revenge." Revenge, alas! upon the dearest part of himself—made so by virtuous love in his own breast, and *therefore* never more to be made otherwise, even by her heaviest fault—to be destroyed, it may be, but assuredly to his own destruction:—

Yea, bloody cloth, I'll keep thee; for I wish'd
Thou shouldst be colour'd thus. You married ones,
If each of you should take this course, how many
Must murder wives *much better than themselves,*
For wrying but a little. . . . . .
. . . . . I am brought hither
Among the Italian gentry, and to fight
Against my lady's kingdom. 'Tis enough
That, Britain, I have kill'd thy mistress. Peace!
I'll give no wound to thee. Therefore, good heavens,
Hear patiently my purpose: I'll disrobe me
Of these Italian weeds, and suit myself
As does a Briton peasant: so I'll fight
Against the part I come with; so I'll die

For thee, O Imogen, even for whom my life
Is, every breath, a death: and thus, unknown,
Pitied nor hated, to the face of peril
Myself I'll dedicate.

After the battle, wherein he earns the praise of Cymbeline as "the poor soldier that so richly fought,"

Whose rags sham'd gilded arms, whose naked breast
Stepp'd before targe of proof,

we find him pursuing the same desolate strain:—

To-day, how many would have given their honours
To have sav'd their carcases!—took heel to do't;—
And yet died too! I, in mine own woe charm'd,
Could not find death where I did hear him groan,
Nor feel him where he struck. Being an ugly monster,
'Tis strange he hides him in fresh cups, soft beds,
Sweet words, or hath more ministers than we
That draw his knives i' the war. Well, I will find him:
For, being now a favourer to the Roman,
No more a Briton, I have resum'd again
The part I came in. Fight I will no more,
But yield me to the veriest hind that shall
Once touch my shoulder. Great the slaughter is
Here made by the Roman, great the answer be
Britons must take: for me, my ransom's death;
On either side I come to spend my breath;
Which neither here I'll keep, nor bear again,
But end it by some means for Imogen!

And when his captors have thrown him into prison, comes the deep climax of his repentant resignation:—

Most welcome, bondage! for thou art a way,
I think, to liberty. . . . .
. . . My conscience, thou art fetter'd
More than my shanks and wrists. You good gods, give me
The penitent instrument, to pick that bolt;
Then, free for ever! . . . . .
For Imogen's dear life, take mine; and though
'Tis not so dear, yet 'tis a life—you coin'd it.
. . . . . And so, great powers,
If you will take this audit, take this life,
And cancel these cold bonds. O Imogen!
I'll speak to thee in silence!

The total omission of these prison scenes in acting, is another great injury done to the dramatic interest as conducted by the poet. There may, indeed, be

valid theatrical reasons for suppressing the vision of Posthumus during the slumber which is supposed to terminate his soliloquy; but the suppression deprives us of the solemnly pathetic effect of that simple chorus, which is plainly introduced in order, by recalling the whole tenour of the story, to remind the auditor that the hero is much more unfortunate than criminal, and to relieve our feelings by announcing an approaching deliverance from adversity, —at the same time that curiosity is kept alive by the mysterious terms in which the prediction is made. The attendant music adds to the soothing solemnity of the scene. How beautiful, too, is the plaintive simplicity of the ballad verses reciting his fortune, chanted by the apparitions of his deceased relatives, not one of whom has he seen in life. Thus, his father Sicilius—

> Great Nature, like his ancestry,
> Moulded the stuff so fair,
> That he deserv'd the praise o' the world,
> As great Sicilius' heir.

Then, one of his brothers who had fallen in battle against the Romans—

> When once he was mature for man,
> In Britain where was he
> That could stand up his parallel;
> Or fruitful object be
> In eye of Imogen, that best
> Could deem his dignity?

Next, his mother—

> With marriage wherefore was he mock'd,
> To be exil'd, and thrown
> From Leonati's seat, and cast
> From her his dearest one,
> Sweet Imogen?

Then, again, Sicilius—

> Why did you suffer Iachimo,
> Slight thing of Italy,
> To taint his nobler heart and brain
> With needless jealousy;
> And to become the geck and scorn
> Of the other's villany?

Now, the second brother—

> For this, from stiller seats we came,
> Our parents and us twain,
> That, striking in our country's cause,
> Fell bravely and were slain,
> Our fealty and Tenantius' right
> With honour to maintain.

And now, again, the first brother—

> Like hardiment Posthumus hath
> To Cymbeline perform'd:
> Then, Jupiter, thou king of gods,
> Why hast thou thus adjourn'd
> The graces for his merits due—
> Being all to dolours turn'd? &c.

In fact, both the sufferings and the deserts of the hero have now reached their climax; nor could they be more affectingly recalled to us than by thus evoking the spirits of his kindred, whose deaths had left him, at his very birth, a brotherless orphan. How fine a change, again, from the brief measure of this artless complaint, to the solemn flow of the lines supposed to be spoken by the descended Jupiter:—

> Poor shadows of Elysium, hence! and rest
> Upon your never-withering banks of flowers:
> Be not with mortal accidents oppress'd;
> No care of yours it is; you know, 'tis ours.
> Whom best I love, I cross; to make my gift,
> Delay'd, the more delighted. Be content;
> Your low-laid son our godhead will uplift:
> His comforts thrive, his trials well are spent.
> Our Jovial star reign'd at his birth, and in
> Our temple was he married. Rise and fade!—
> He shall be lord of lady Imogen,
> And happier much by his affliction made. &c.

And then, with what exquisite versatility does this miraculous artist change his hand once more, to give us that gloriously classical description of the deity's appearance, breathing all the sweet sublimity of a Milton, or even of a Sophocles!—

> *Sicilius.* He came in thunder; his celestial breath
> Was sulphurous to smell; the holy eagle
> Stoop'd, as to foot us: his ascension is
> More sweet than our bless'd fields; his royal bird

> Prunes the immortal wing, and cloys his beak,
> As when his god is pleas'd!

Posthumus, however, awakes as from an ordinary dream—

> Poor wretches, that depend
> On greatness' favour, dream as I have done;
> Wake, and find nothing.

Yet he finds the tablet laid upon his breast, foretelling an end to his miseries and prosperity to Britain, but in terms too mysterious for him to unriddle:—

> 'Tis still a dream; or else such stuff as madmen
> Tongue, and brain not: either both, or nothing:
> Or senseless speaking, or a speaking such
> As sense cannot untie. Be what it is,
> The action of my life is like it, which
> I'll keep, if but for sympathy.

And so he remains in perplexity, mocked by the mere phantom of hope.

We by no means agree with those who are disposed to think that the comic scene with the gaoler, which follows (omitted with the rest in acting), was introduced by Shakespeare more for the sake of making some "quantity of barren spectators laugh," than from any real regard to dramatic art and propriety. It would be strange indeed to find him so trifling in the very midst of such intense earnestness! No—Shakespeare knew well that he was but presenting to us the last inevitable phasis of the mind in him who is at once condemned to death and desiring it—that "lightning before death" of which he elsewhere tells us—that careless interval when the man has cheerfully parted with this world, and is ready to "encounter darkness as a bride." The single line of Posthumus to the gaoler, "I am merrier to die than thou art to live," conveys at once the spirit and the vindication of the whole scene.

We are now arrived at a point where it is necessary, before terminating our view of the developement of Posthumus's character, to consider that part of Iachimo's which is unfolded in his remorse and his confession.

Be it well observed, that he is shown to us from the first as a disbeliever in feminine virtue, not like Iago, from an inherent grossness of nature, rendering him inaccessible to the very idea; but from an experience of the sex, which has been so exclusively vicious, as to work in him a most sincere conviction of the truth of the doctrine which he maintains respecting them. The greatest triumph, we have already remarked, which the poet gives to the pure radiance of Imogen's beauty, consists in the shock which the very first sight of her gives to this article of faith in the creed of the confirmed voluptuary. The result of his interview uproots it entirely: he is already a convert in theory, although too many motives of self-interest and self-love still urge him to be a sinner in practice. At once, however, he undergoes the bitter internal humiliation of being reduced from the part of a first-rate seducer, to the viler and more pitiable one of a cunning slanderer. We see every reason to presume that, as the terms of his final confession assure us, he had set out for Britain with no predetermination whatever to commit so black a piece of deception, but had unexpectedly found himself driven to it as a last desperate expedient. His conscience, which had rather misgiven him on his first interview with the lady, is much more ill at ease in the stealthy chamber scene; and in the following explanation with Posthumus, with all his consummate self-possession, we yet find there is something that withholds him from averring any *literal* falsehoods, at least, that he can avoid. And when once his vanity and his covetousness are thoroughly gratified, by the saving of his property and his reputation, and the winning of the costly jewel, the foulness of his guilt in calumniating such lovely and majestic purity begins to oppress him, as one who is not by nature insensible to the charms of moral beauty as well as personal. In this frame of mind we find him when, on his reappearance in Britain with the Roman troops, he is disarmed by Posthumus in disguise—

The heaviness and guilt within my bosom
Takes off my manhood: I have belied a lady,
The princess of this country; and the air on't
Revengingly enfeebles me.

This prepares us for his behaviour in the scene where, when brought captive before Cymbeline, he is questioned respecting the diamond ring upon his finger:—

I'm glad to be constrain'd to utter that
Which torments me to conceal. By villany
I got this ring: 'twas Leonatus' jewel,
Whom thou didst banish; and (which more may grieve thee,
As it doth me) a nobler sir ne'er liv'd
'Twixt sky and ground. . . . . .
. . . . That paragon, thy daughter—
For whom my heart drops blood, and my false spirits
Quail to remember——Give me leave—I faint.—
. . . . . .
Upon a time (unhappy was the clock
That struck the hour!)—it was in Rome (accurs'd
The mansion where!)—'twas at a feast (oh, would
Our viands had been poison'd! or, at least,
Those which I heav'd to head!), &c.

The confession that follows, we have already cited. When the criminal, at the end of it, after describing the imposture he had practised upon Leonatus, begins to speak of the passion into which it had thrown him,—

Whereupon,—
Methinks I see him now,—

comes that wonderfully effective dramatic situation, where Posthumus comes forward and discovers himself:—

Ay, so thou dost,
Italian fiend! Ah me, most credulous fool,
Egregious murderer, thief, anything
That's due to all the villains past, in being,
To come! O give me cord, or knife, or poison,
Some upright justicer! Thou, king, send out
For torturers ingenious! It is I
That all the abhorred things o' the earth amend
By being worse than they! I am Posthumus,
That kill'd thy daughter;—villain-like, I lie;—
That caus'd a lesser villain than myself,
A sacrilegious thief, to do't. The temple
Of virtue was she—yea, and she herself.——

Spit, and throw stones, cast mire upon me, set
The dogs o' the street to bay me: every villain
Be call'd Posthumus Leonatus; and
Be villany less than 'twas!——O Imogen!
My queen, my life, my wife!—O Imogen,
Imogen, Imogen!

Nothing can exceed the dramatic beauty of this electric burst of agonizing shame and remorse from the husband's heart, thus taking the place of Iachimo's intended account of the transport of vindictive rage into which he had fallen when first persuaded of his wife's infidelity. The atonement to the injured name of Imogen is now complete, and the catastrophe of the drama fully prepared; but before proceeding to it, we shall trace the rich developement of the character of the heroine herself, through all that romantic variety of fortune and of situation, by which the poet has so fondly delighted to diversify the exhibition of her personal, moral, and intellectual graces.

3.—IMOGEN AND PISANIO.

[April 1st, 1843.]

THE more we find reason to believe that Shakespeare designed his Imogen as a type of feminine excellence—a model of rich, genuine, delicate, and cultivated womanhood,—the more important it seems that we should truly estimate the qualities with which he has really endowed her;—since it is plain that any appreciation of them that falls below the standard to which the dramatist has raised them, becomes a detraction either from the power of Shakespeare's own genius, or, which is a more injurious error still, from the dignity of that sex whose

charms and whose merits he has here undertaken to personify and to celebrate.

First of all, then, let us observe, how studiously the poet has insulated the moral and intellectual beauty of the attachment between the heroine and her lover, amid the weakness, wickedness, and meanness of the court which surrounds them. It sparkles in lustre, like the diamond which Imogen places on the finger of her husband; it trembles in loveliness, like the parting kiss which she "had set between two charming words." Her mother dead, her brothers stolen in their infancy, how must the heart and mind of Imogen have grown up in sympathy with her orphan playmate, so brave and gentle, so graceful, intelligent, and accomplished. How pure and perfect their reciprocal affection, is beautifully shown in the two passages, where Imogen says of Posthumus to her father—

> He is
> A man worth any woman—*overbuys me*
> *Almost the sum he pays,*—

and where Posthumus says to Imogen,

> As I my poor self did exchange for you
> *To your so infinite loss, &c.*

This is the very religion of true and happy love—it thinks not of *giving*—imagines not that it gives at all—it is all boundless gratitude for what it *receives.*

This lady "fair and royal," in uniting herself to this "poor but worthy gentleman," has but been true to her early affections and her matured judgment; the folly, inconsistency, and falsehood, lie all in her weak father, ruled by her wicked stepmother, who would fain marry the heiress of the kingdom to her worthless and booby son. Thus the dramatist has taken care to shew his heroine, from the very beginning, notwithstanding her clandestine marriage, free from the taint of disobedient self-will. By drawing the character of Cloten, too, at full length, shewing it in thorough contrast with that of Posthumus and in

utter repugnance to that of Imogen, we are made yet more forcibly to feel how fully and how justly her intellect has sanctioned her own disposal of her heart.

That intellect, indeed, not only beams serenely above the agitation of her own feelings, tenderly thrilling as that agitation is; but the light of it, radiant in her words, discovers to us the true aspect of every character about her. She is not only the most exquisitely feeling, but the most keenly penetrating person of the drama,—not only the finest poet of the piece, but the noblest moralist also. How admirably do her very first words hit off the whole character of her stepmother,—

> Oh
> Dissembling courtesy! How fine this tyrant
> Can tickle where she wounds!

How convincingly does she state her father's cruel folly! And how truly expressed are the respective characters of her husband and her suitor in the metaphor, "I chose an eagle, and did avoid a puttock." And then, what a charming developement of this parallel of hers do we find in the following passage of her subsequent altercation with Cloten, wherein, still to borrow her own expression, she is "'sprighted with a fool, frighted, and anger'd worse:"—

> *Cloten.* You sin against
> Obedience, which you owe your father. For,
> The contract you pretend with that base wretch
> (One bred of alms, and foster'd with cold dishes,
> With scraps o' the court), it is no contract, none—
> And though it be allow'd in meaner parties
> (Yet who than he more mean?) to knit their souls
> (On whom there is no more dependency
> But brats and beggary) in self-figur'd knot;
> Yet you are curb'd from that enlargement by
> The consequence o' the crown; and must not soil
> The precious note of it with a base slave—
> A hilding for a livery—a squire's cloth—
> A pantler—not so eminent.
> *Imogen.* Profane fellow!
> Wert thou the son of Jupiter, and no more
> But what thou art besides, thou wert too base
> To be his groom: thou wert dignified enough,

Even to the point of envy, if 'twere made
Comparative for your virtues, to be styl'd
The under-hangman of his kingdom, and hated
For being preferr'd so well.

How delicious, again, the dignified familiarity of her communing with her husband's faithful servant Pisanio, and his affectionate veneration for her, making him proof against all the temptations held out by the ambitious and crafty stepmother, to induce him to avail himself of the place he holds in his lady's confidence, to incline her to forget his banish'd lord,

Who cannot be new-built, nor has no friends
So much as but to prop him.

The dramatist, we see, was sensible that the refinement, no less than the constancy, of affectionate feeling, was a quality indispensable to the personage whom, in the character of a confidential servant, both to his hero and his heroine, he designed to be the guardian genius of their mutual faith and love, amid those formidable trials of both which were to make the leading interest of the drama. To no vulgar follower, however steadily attached—to none but a delicate as well as intelligent spirit—could Imogen have been represented as unbosoming all her sweetest and tenderest emotions of affection and solicitude for her absent lord. How beautifully is this interesting position of Pisanio, as the one sure medium of communication between two such hearts, first brought before us in that early scene where, after being anxiously sent back by his departing master to attend upon his otherwise unprotected mistress, she, in turn, despatches him to the haven, to bring her the very, very latest intelligence of his master's safety. And how her clear, bright imagination keeps pace with her ardent feeling, in the scene where Pisanio so expressively describes her lord's embarkation:—

I would have broke mine eye-strings; crack'd them, but
To look upon him; till the diminution
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle;
Nay, follow'd him, till he had melted from

> The smallness of a gnat to air; and then
> Have turn'd mine eye, and wept!—But, good Pisanio,
> When shall we hear from him?

Again, how clearly does she render to us all the bearings of her position, as well as the whole cast of the feelings resulting from it, in the brief soliloquy:—

> A father cruel, and a step-dame false;
> A foolish suitor to a wedded lady,
> That hath her husband banish'd;—Oh, that husband,
> My *supreme crown of grief*—and those repeated
> Vexations of it! Had I been thief-stolen
> As my two brothers, happy!—but most miserable
> Is the desire that's glorious!—Bless'd be those,
> How mean soe'er, that have their honest wills,
> Which seasons comfort!

How effectively, too, this precedes the appearance of Iachimo, introduced to her by Pisanio—

> Madam, a noble gentleman of Rome
> Comes from my lord with letters.—

and her delighted agitation in opening and perusing them—

> So far I read aloud—
> But even the very middle of my heart
> Is warm'd by the rest, and takes it thankfully.

Let us mark the beautiful clearness of intellect, as well as purity of heart, which she manifests throughout this trying scene. Already, in treating the character of Iachimo, we have shown how her interest and her confidence are bespoken, absolutely commanded, for that visitor by the terms of her husband's letter which he bears—how the door is closed in her mind against all suspicion of the Italian's character and intentions, by her beloved Leonatus's own hand. She feels the kindest solicitude for one whom her husband owns as his benefactor. His abstracted and disordered behaviour first of all makes her fear that he is unwell,—next, that something ill has befallen her husband. It is from no weak simplicity, but through the most logical deductions, that she accepts all his exclamations and disclosures as sincere, until, oppressed by the sense of calamity

rather than of wrong, she so simply and beautifully says, "My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain;" and adds, in answer to her informant, who goes on, adding to her load of already intolerable anguish, "Let me hear no more!" Iachimo, we see, here overacts his part. The disgusting detail into which he immediately enters, as to the way in which, he says, her husband spends the money drawn from her own coffers, instead of strengthening her conviction and rousing her resentment, as he had anticipated, has precisely the contrary effects. It both affords her time to recover from the first stunning shock given to her mind by such a communication acting upon the unguarded confidence into which she had been betrayed, and, by the very overcharging of the picture which he draws, begins to awaken her incredulity as to the truth of the representation. And so soon as he has ventured on his insulting proposal, how finely does the clear activity of her intellect appear in her instant call for the faithful Pisanio, whom her treacherous visitor has designedly sent away on a feigned errand, to look after his own servant.

Such a demonstration as this, from any woman in the like circumstances, whatever consciousness of physical weakness it may shew, is an eminent proof of moral energy and ready self-possession. It is one of the many instances, in the course of Shakespeare's developement of this character, which shew her so remarkably endowed with practical as well as speculative wisdom. A weak woman, intellectually speaking, would first of all have given vent to her indignation against the seducer: but the first thing which occurs to the firm, clear mind of Imogen is, not what she is called upon to *say* in this extraordinary emergency, but what it behoves her to *do*. She is instantly conscious, in herself, less of the insulted princess than of the woman who needs personal protection: for the highest heroism in woman, according to Shakespeare, is, at the same time, the most essentially feminine: he admitted not the virago into his ideal of female

excellence: to borrow the words of Pisanio himself in relation to his mistress, our poet makes "fear and niceness" to be

> The handmaids of all women, or, more truly,
> Woman its pretty self.

The ensuing explanation on the part of Iachimo, and her consequent reconciliation, demand our particular attention; the more, because, among other important misconceptions as to the qualities and the conduct of this personage, Hazlitt, in his examination of this play, has the following remark upon this passage:—"Her readiness to pardon Iachimo's false imputations and his designs against herself, is a good lesson to prudes; and may shew, that where there is a real attachment to virtue, it has no need to bolster itself up with an outrageous or affected antipathy to vice;" an observation which Mrs. Jameson, in her account of the character of Imogen, cites at full length, and sanctions, by telling us, "This is true."

But this version of the matter is nothing less than degrading both to the intellect and the delicacy of the heroine as portrayed by Shakespeare. It is talking as if, when, according to Hazlitt, she "pardons" Iachimo, or, as Mrs. Jameson expresses it, is "pacified," she still believed that her Italian visitor had really intended to leave her husband slandered in her opinion, and her own purity stained. Had she continued so to believe, it would have been contamination to her to exchange another sentence with one whom she held to be so foul a villain. But he, "singular in his art," has with subtle dexterity converted, in her estimation, his very defamation of her husband and his insult to herself, into a precious testimony of his extreme solicitude for her dear lord's welfare—that most irresistible of all claims upon her kindly regard. He had spoken thus, only "to know if her affiance were deeply rooted," and to enable himself to carry back to her husband the more gratifying report of her incorruptible constancy. His eloquent eulogy of Leonatus—

He sits 'mongst men like a descended god, &c.—

has a double charm for her by contrast with the foulness of his previous imputations. She betrays no weakness of judgment in accepting this explanation from a man introduced to her, under her husband's own hand, as "one of the noblest note," to whose kindnesses he was most infinitely obliged. Overlooking, though not quite forgetting, the liberty taken with herself, the revulsion of feeling in her generous breast makes her welcome the insinuating stranger with hardly less cordiality than before, though with the added reserve of a dignity and a delicacy too lately wounded.

How finely, too, does the reflection, shortly after, of one of the lords attending upon Cloten, prepare us for the added peril to her fame exhibited before us in the bedchamber scene:—

> Alas, poor princess,
> Thou divine Imogen, what thou endur'st!
> Betwixt a father by thy stepdame govern'd;
> A mother hourly coining plots; a wooer,
> More hateful than the foul expulsion is
> Of thy dear husband, than that horrid act
> Of the divorce he'd make! The heavens hold firm
> The walls of thy dear honour! keep unshak'd
> That temple, thy fair mind! that thou mayst stand
> To enjoy thy banish'd lord, and this great land.

How beautifully is the sentiment of these lines continued in her own brief orison, which immediately follows:—

> To your protection I commend me, gods!
> From fairies, and the tempters of the night,
> Guard me, beseech ye!—

as this, again, gives added effect to the stealing of Iachimo from his hiding-place—

> Our Tarquin thus
> Did softly press the rushes, ere he waken'd
> The chastity he wounded.

With what wonderful art, indeed, has Shakespeare lavished every sort of homage upon this his favourite

model of a glorious woman—making even self-sufficient fatuity own her influence no less than selfish villany. After the Italian thief has breathed out his hymn to that lovely purity, so awful in its defencelessness, in those low accents suited to his midnight proceeding, how delightful is the change to that daybreak salutation from the booby prince's musicians, which seems to soar on the very wings of the lark—that "wonderful sweet air, with admirable rich words to it"—combining, in its cheerful cadence and its luscious rhyme, its dews and its blossoms, the voluptuousness of midsummer with the buoyancy of spring. What a delicious comment upon Iachimo's proud celebration of her sleeping charms, do we find in the closing strain of the serenade—

With every thing that pretty bin,
My lady sweet, arise!
Arise, arise!

But the troubles of poor Imogen thicken around her: it is just when she is most tormentingly "sprighted by a fool," that she misses the precious bracelet:—

Go, bid my woman
Search for a jewel, that too casually
Hath left mine arm; it was thy master's: 'shrew me,
If I would lose it for a revenue
Of any king's in Europe. I do think
I saw't this morning: confident I am,
Last night 'twas on mine arm; I kissed it.
I hope it be not gone to tell my lord
That I kiss aught but he.

Why, let us ask, is this last most exquisitely significant sentence omitted in acting? Surely, surely the suppression cannot have been owing to any suspicion that something approaching to indelicacy here drops from the lips of Imogen! Yet, as no other motive seems conceivable for striking out a sentence of such peculiar dramatic force, and as mere wantonness can hardly have produced what would in that case be so senseless a mutilation, we are compelled to attribute it to misapprehension as to the

decorousness of the words themselves coming from the mouth of the heroine—a misapprehension which, in vindication of the poet's consistency, and the peculiar delicacy of mind so constantly preserved in this character, we feel it necessary distinctly to expose.

The palpable error, then, must here have been committed by the theatrical censor, whoever he be, of transferring to the mind of the heroine herself some suspicion of the fact whereof the auditor, at this point of the drama, is fully conscious—that the bracelet is really gone to testify against her. But there is not another word in the play which indicates that any such suspicion has once entered her mind. It is the pure innocence of her heart, and the ready playfulness of her fancy, that produce the touchingly sportive wish, that the jewel may not be gone to tell her lord she kisses "*aught* but he;"—"*aught*," be it observed—not "*any one*." The ideas suggested by this latter expression would have been as contaminating to her spotless soul, as the very imagination that such a charge could have been forged against her would have been foreign to her unsuspicious nature. Her words are clearly to be taken in their strictly *literal* sense, as a mere sally from the tender sportiveness of anxious affection. So far, then, from their being, as any deliberate suppresser of the sentence must have supposed them to be, of the nature of a conscious *double entendre*, their delicate simplicity derives a higher charm by contrast with that compound sense which they necessarily assume in the mind of the auditor. Here, in short, we find one of the subtlest master-strokes of dramatic skill of which even a Shakespeare was capable; for, besides that exquisite significance which we have already pointed out, how much is this proscribed sentence needed, to give full effect to the exclamations of Pisanio, on perusing the next letter from his master:—

> How! of adultery? Wherefore write you not
> What monster's her accuser? Leonatus?
> Oh, master! what a strange infection

Is fallen into thy ear? What false Italian
(As poisonous tongu'd as handed) hath prevail'd
On thy too ready hearing? Disloyal! no,
She's punish'd for her truth; and undergoes,
More goddess-like than wife-like, such assaults
As would take in some virtue. Oh, my master!
Thy mind to her is now as low as were
Thy fortunes.——How! that I should murder her!
Upon the love, and truth, and vows, which I
Have made to thy command! . . . . .
. . . . . *The letter*
That I have sent her, by her own command
Shall give thee opportunity.

It is this letter, sent for this purpose, his presenting of which—

Madam, here is a letter from my lord—

draws from her another of those exquisitely characteristic effusions:—

Who? thy lord? that is, my lord? Leonatus?
Oh, learn'd indeed were that astronomer
That knew the stars as I his characters;
He'd lay the future open! You good gods,
Let what is here contain'd relish of love,
Of my lord's health, of his content—yet not
That we two are asunder—let that grieve him
(Some griefs are med'cinable; that is one of them,
For it doth physic love)—of his content,
All but in that!——Good wax, thy leave. Bless'd be
You bees that make these locks of counsel! Lovers,
And men in dangerous bonds, pray not alike;
Though forfeiters you cast in prison, yet
You clasp young Cupid's tables.——Good news, gods!

We know nothing that has been said upon the charms of epistolary correspondence between absent lovers that approaches this delicious passage, except the words of Heloise on the same subject, in the opening of the first of her celebrated letters.

Then, when her eye catches her husband's intimation of his landing in Cambria, and his wish that she should *renew him with her eyes*, how glorious the instant leaping forward of her heart—

Oh, for a horse with wings!

that she may fly

To this same blessed Milford!

And how delicious her fond parentheses:—

Then, true Pisanio,
(Who long'st, like me, to see thy lord—who long'st—
Oh, let me 'bate—but not like me—yet long'st,
But in a fainter kind—oh, not like me!
For mine's *beyond beyond*)—say (and speak thick—
Love's counsellor should fill the bores of hearing
To the smothering of the sense) how far it is, &c.

This is quite equal, in passionate eagerness, to Juliet's exclamation—

Love's heralds should be thoughts,
That ten times faster fly than the sun's beams, &c.

Yet how quickly does her practical understanding recover its ascendancy:—

But this is foolery:
Go, bid my woman feign a sickness; say
She'll home to her father; and provide me, presently,
A riding-suit, no costlier than would fit
A franklin's housewife.

The next scene between these two interesting personages brings us to the very "heart's core" of the drama, its "heart of heart"—scarcely rivalled for pathos even on the page of Shakespeare. What can surpass the painting which the dialogue here gives us of that agonizing moment, the disclosure of his master's murderous purpose, by the faithful servant, to his beloved and venerated mistress?—

Imo. Thou told'st me, when we came from horse, the place
Was near at hand. Ne'er long'd my mother so
To see me first, as I have now. Pisanio! Man!
Where *is* Posthumus? What is in thy mind
That makes thee stare thus? Wherefore breaks that sigh
From the inward of thee? One but painted thus,
Would be interpreted a thing perplex'd
Beyond self-explication. Put thyself
Into a 'haviour of less fear, ere wildness
Vanquish my staider senses.——What's the matter?
Why tender'st thou that paper to me with
A look untender? If it be summer news,
Smile to't before; if winterly, thou needst
But keep that countenance still.——My husband's hand?
That drug-damn'd Italy hath out-craftied him,

And he's at some hard point.——Speak, man—thy tongue
May take off some extremity which to read
Would be even mortal to me.
Pisa. Please you, read;
And you shall find me, wretched man, a thing
The most disdain'd of fortune! . . . .
What shall I need to draw my sword?—The paper
Hath cut her throat already!

How beautifully does her recovering exclamation contrast with her husband's rumination, to which we have before adverted, upon the supposed easiness of Iachimo's success. It gives us, too, another of those enchanting pictures of virtuous loveliness, wherein we find the dramatist's imagination revelling throughout his treatment of this character:—

False to his bed! What is it to be false?
To lie in watch there, and to think on him:
To weep 'twixt clock and clock: if sleep charge nature,
To break it with a fearful dream of him,
And cry myself awake? That's false to his bed,
Is it?

To account for this extravagant imputation upon her, but one alternative presents itself to her mind—that Leonatus himself is false. Taking it to be at least as improbable, that he should believe in her infidelity, as that he should himself be unfaithful, the detailed account of his misconduct, which Iachimo had given her, and so suddenly retracted, revives in her memory, and very naturally and logically hastens her to the conclusion that, after all, it had been well-grounded, and only withdrawn to appease her indignation:—

I false! Thy conscience witness!——Iachimo,
Thou didst accuse him of incontinency;
Thou then look'dst like a villain; now, methinks,
Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy,
Whose mother was her painting, hath betray'd him.
Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;
And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
I must be ripp'd—to pieces with me!

And now, the following passages demand especial attention; for in them the poet unfolds to us the in-

most recesses of his heroine's heart and mind; shewing us the liveliness of her fancy ever keeping pace with the warmth of her feeling, and the brightness of her intellect with the glow of her imagination. It behoves us, also, by comparing her behaviour and language on this occasion, with those of Posthumus under the like violently painful excitement, to mark narrowly the superiority over her husband, in understanding as well as in heart, which the dramatist has studiously maintained in her under these most trying circumstances of all.

Posthumus, then, for his wife's alleged inconstancy alone, seeks deliberately to take her life; but she, by the far greater enormity of guilt and wrong which she believes him to have committed against herself, in adding to his conjugal infidelity the command to murder her, is moved not to the selfish passion of revenge, but to that noblest kind of pity that even the most exalted Christian morality can teach—the pity of the injured for the injurer:—

> Though those that are betray'd
> Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor
> Stands in worse case of woe!
> And thou, Posthumus, thou that didst set up
> My disobedience 'gainst the king my father,
> And make me put into contempt the suits
> Of princely fellows, shalt hereafter find
> It is no act of common passage, but
> A strain of rareness;—and I grieve myself,
> To think, when thou shalt be disedg'd by her
> That now thou tir'st on, how thy memory
> Will then be pang'd by me!

"A strain of rareness," indeed, is this; the most signal exhibition of all which the developement of this noble character presents to us, of moral elevation towering above the dignity of rank. Yet on this occasion, if on any conceivable one, might the offended princess have asserted herself against the injuries offered her by the man whose mind, according to Pisanio's expression, is now "as low to her" as once his fortunes were.

Posthumus, again, we have seen, is hurried on by the astounding conviction of his own wife's frailty, to

a sweeping condemnation of all womankind. But the high, calm intellect of Imogen, under her vastly greater provocation, is not so blinded into passionate injustice. She does not infer that all mankind *are* false, but only that such unexpected falsehood will *cast suspicion on the true:*—

> Oh,
> Men's vows are women's traitors! All good seeming,
> By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought
> Put on for villany; not born where't grows,
> But worn a bait for ladies.
> True honest men, being heard like false Æneas,
> Were, in his time, thought false: and Sinon's weeping
> Did scandal many a holy tear; took pity . .
> From most true wretchedness. So thou, Posthumus,
> Wilt lay thy leaven on all proper men;
> Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjur'd,
> From thy great fall!

She desires to die; but here, again, her moral and intellectual superiority displays itself. She does not seek death wantonly and gratuitously, as Posthumus does when he repents him of his rash revenge:—

> Against self-slaughter
> There is a prohibition so divine,
> That cravens my weak hand.

But she feels herself at liberty to insist upon Pisanio's executing his master's command:—

> Come, fellow, be thou honest;
> Do thou thy master's bidding: when thou seest him,
> A little witness my obedience; look!
> I draw the sword myself: take it, and hit
> The innocent mansion of my love, my heart:
> Fear not—'tis empty of all things but grief;
> Thy master is not there, who was, indeed,
> The riches of it! . . . . . .
> . . . . . Come, here's my heart.
> Something's afore't. Soft, soft, we'll no defence—
> Obedient as the scabbard! What is here?
> The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,
> All turn'd to heresy! Away, away,
> Corrupters of my faith! you shall no more
> Be stomachers to my heart! Thus may poor fools
> Believe false teachers. . . . . .
> . . . . . Pr'ythee, despatch—

> The lamb intreats the butcher! Where's thy knife?
> Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding,
> When I desire it too!

Pisanio, we find, entertains not for a moment the belief of his master's incontinency; for, on the one hand, he has not heard Iachimo's story of his conduct; and, on the other, his very sex, and that kind of experience of the world which it has naturally brought him, render him far more aware than his mistress of the depth of artful deceit which a male villain may practise; while her own womanly apprehensions as naturally suggest to her, that she is wronged through the arts of some "Roman courtezan." However, she is too much interested in finding herself mistaken, not to be easily persuaded by her trusty counsellor to suspend her conviction until, by placing herself near her husband's foreign residence, she can have more certain information as to his conduct. And how beautifully do we trace all the woman, so fond yet so delicate, in her brief assent to Pisanio's proposal:—

> Oh, for such means!
> Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,
> I would adventure.

How exquisitely conceived, again, is the whole of Pisanio's instruction to her how to assume and to enact her masculine part, with his gracefully and respectfully affectionate farewell:—

> To some shade,
> And fit you to your manhood. May the gods
> Direct you to the best!

We need scarcely enlarge upon the surpassing grace and sweetness of her scenes with Belarius and her unknown brothers, familiar as they are to the heart of every lover of beauty and of Shakespeare. The peculiar and inexpressible charm of Imogen's male personation, results from her unvarying feminine consciousness, accompanied by that equally constant self-possession which lets her not for a moment forget, in the presence of others, the assumed

character of manhood which she is enacting. Hence it is, that the indefinable captivation which, in her page's garb, she exercises over every beholder, never once occasions her sex to be suspected. Herein, therefore, the strength and subtlety of her intellect are especially conspicuous; the more so for the presence in her of that exquisitely feminine nature, which enhances the difficulty of her assuming the masculine character, by rendering it quite impossible for her to follow Pisanio's instruction that she should change "fear and niceness"

> to a waggish courage,
> Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy, and
> As quarrellous as the weasel.

We must select two short passages which peculiarly illustrate this observation. The first is that where she comes out of the cave, when surprised by the return of Bélarius and his youths from the chase. The "fear and niceness" of "woman its pretty self," exhibited in this charming scene, have been much remarked; yet these, we contend, form not the predominating qualities of her deportment on this occasion,—which we take to be, her clear conception of her own position at the moment, and her ready fertility of thought and language suited to the emergency,—in one word, as we have said before, her practical sagacity. Having ever, as a princess, been taught that "all's savage but at court," the language of propitiation which here she so eloquently utters, proceeds rather from an undisturbed intelligence than from the agitation of fear,—appealing to the reason as irresistibly as to the feelings:—

> Good masters, harm me not.
> Before I enter'd here, I call'd; and thought
> To have begg'd, or bought, what I have took. Good troth,
> I have stolen nought; nor would not, though I had found
> Gold strew'd o' the floor. Here's money for my meat:
> I would have left it on the board, so soon
> As I had made my meal; and parted
> With prayers for the provider.
> *Guiderius.* Money, youth!

Arviragus. All gold and silver rather turn to dirt!
As 'tis no better reckon'd, but of those
Who worship dirty gods.
Imogen. I see, you are angry.
Know, if you kill me for my fault, I should
Have died had I not made it.
Belarius. Whither bound?
Imo. To Milford-haven, sir.
Bel. What is your name?
Imo. Fidele, sir: I have a kinsman, who
Is bound for Italy; he embark'd at Milford;
To whom being going, almost spent with hunger,
I am fallen in this offence.

Again, how her strong understanding, no less than her noble heart, appears in the comment which she afterwards makes upon her undeception regarding the character of these mountaineers:—

These are kind creatures. Gods, what lies I have heard!
Our courtiers say, all's savage but at court:
Experience, oh, thou disprov'st report!
The imperious seas breed monsters; for the dish,
Poor tributary rivers as sweet fish.

The other passage to which we have alluded, is that where she prevails on her outlaw entertainers to leave her, though unwell, alone at the cave, and attend to their daily occupation:—

Bel. You are not well: remain here in the cave;
We'll come to you after hunting.
Arv. Brother, stay here:
Are we not brothers?
Imo. So man and man should be;
But clay and clay differs in dignity,
Whose dust is both alike. I am very sick.
Guid. Go you to hunting—I'll abide with him.
Imo. So sick I am not. Yet I am not well;
But not so citizen a wanton, as
To seem to die ere sick. So please you, leave me.
Stick to your journal course: the breach of custom
Is breach of all. I am ill; but your being by me
Cannot amend me: society is no comfort
To one not sociable. I am not very sick,
Since I can reason of it. Pray you, trust me here:
I'll rob none but myself; and let me die,
Stealing so poorly.

The exquisite pathos of the scenes where Belarius and the brothers lament over the seeming death of "the bird that they had made so much on," has been universally felt and acknowledged: yet an injury is done to it by the present mode of performing them at Drury-Lane, which, in justice to the dramatist, we feel bound to point out. The dirge by Collins, indeed, has been very properly dismissed as a piece of meretricious obtrusion; but the sort of duet into which the simply recited verses of Shakespeare have been converted, does hardly less violence to the spirit of the original passage. Shakespeare, in his every piece, like a true and great artist, keeps the musical in strict subordination to the dramatic,—a principle which, in dealing with his plays, no manager is at liberty to compromise. The poet, in the instance before us, is not seeking to regale the ears of his audience, but has the nobler purpose of striking deeply into their hearts. The affectionate grief of these artless youths for the loss of their lovely companion, whom we, the auditors, know to be their sister—with this it is that he cares to impress us, not with an admiration of their cultivated vocal powers, the incongruity of gifting them with which, under their homely training, was also, doubtless, present to his mind. We have already pointed out the beautiful contrast which he sets before us, between Iachimo's refined description of the sleeping Imogen, and Arviragus's simple effusion over the lifeless Fidele; and to us it is equally plain that Shakespeare designed the like opposition, in every way, between the "wonderful sweet air" of Cloten's serenade which follows upon Iachimo's oration, and the verses which the mourning brothers had, when children, sung over their foster-mother, but are now too much choked by manly grief to sing over the corpse of their adopted brother:—

Guid. Cadwal,
I cannot sing: I'll weep, and word it with thee;
For notes of sorrow, out of tune, are worse
Than priests and fanes that lie.
Arv. *We'll speak it, then.*

Here, we do think, the poet should have been felt to have given a sufficient admonition to forbear converting into a sort of operatic chant the artless lines that follow, like the rough sighing of autumnal winds among the fallen and the falling leaves!

The awaking of Imogen from the trance into which Pisanio's potion had thrown her, and the recognition of what she supposes to be the headless corpse of her husband, is a scene of agony much akin to that of the waking of Juliet in the sepulchral vault. The revulsion of feeling is even more violent. The horror of recognizing Posthumus's person with such certainty, as she thinks, by the figure and the dress, but missing those adored features on which she had been wont to hang so fondly,—with the conviction flashing at the same moment across her mind that her husband, after all, was true to her, and her servant false, in league with their common enemy,—may well draw from her the exclamation—

> Pisanio,
> All curses madded Hecuba gave the Greeks,
> And mine to boot, be darted on thee!

Here, again, the dramatist makes his heroine conduct herself in strict accordance with his general conception of her character. Left, she supposes, friendless in the world, by the death of her husband, and the treachery of the man whom they had believed to be their one faithful adherent, she yields to the sole offer of kindliness that presents itself to her upon earth, and attaches herself, in her page's character, to the service of the Roman commander. And with what exquisite art is the greatest probability given to this passage—with what beautiful and pathetic truth of nature is it managed. How charmingly is her undeviating presence of mind, as to her masculine part and her page's attire, made to produce from her, in answer to the Roman's enquiry, "What art thou?" that touching expression of fond fidelity, which only the soul of an Imogen, and under that peculiar combination of circumstances, could have breathed out:—

I am nothing: or if not,
Nothing to be were better. This was my master,
A very valiant Briton, and a good,
That here by mountaineers lies slain. Alas!
There are no more such masters: I may wander
From east to occident, cry out for service,
Try many, all good, serve truly, never
Find such another master!

Already she has been informed, of "noble Lucius," that "he's honourable, and, doubling that, most holy." We are, therefore, prepared for his kind response to this tender lamentation, and for Imogen's consent to follow him:—

'Lack, good youth!
Thou mov'st no less with thy complaining, than
Thy master in bleeding. . . . . .
Wilt take thy chance with me? I will not say,
Thou shalt be so well master'd; but, be sure,
No less belov'd. The Roman emperor's letters,
Sent by a consul to me, should not sooner
Than thine own worth prefer thee. Go with me.
Imogen. I'll follow, sir. But first, an't please the gods,
I'll hide my master from the flies, as deep
As these poor pickaxes can dig; and when
With wild-wood leaves and weeds I have strew'd his grave,
And on it said a century of prayers,
Such as I can, twice o'er,—I'll weep, and sigh;
And leaving so his service, follow you,
So please you entertain me.
Lucius. Ay, good youth;
And rather father thee, than master thee.
My friends,
The boy hath taught us manly duties. Let us
Find out the prettiest daisied plot we can,
And make him, with our pikes and partisans,
A grave.

And here we see the honourable interment of her dear lord's remains, establishing already a bond of deepest gratitude in the noble heart of Imogen towards her new protector. How she discharged it, appears in the terms in which Lucius afterwards entreats of Cymbeline to spare her life alone among the Roman prisoners—

Never master had
A page so kind, so duteous, diligent,

So tender over his occasions, true,
So feat, so nurse-like.

How beautifully does this enhance our feeling of the superior intensity of interest which makes her leave this kind master's life to "shuffle for itself," and attracts her to the ring which she espies on the finger of the captive Iachimo. And then, again, how gloriously pathetic is that forgetfulness of her male disguise, which comes over her, for the *first* time, when she hears her name reiterated in the accents of agonizing remorse from the breast of the still faithful husband, who stands before her as one risen from the dead! The blow which, by springing forward with the exclamation—"Peace, peace, my lord! hear, hear!" she brings upon herself from Posthumus, mistaking her for an impertinent page, is the most pathetic incident of the whole piece, and gives the crowning effect to his recognition of her whom he had thought to be murdered by his own revengeful act:—

Imo. Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?—
Think that you are upon a rock—and now
Throw me again!
Post. Hang there like fruit, my soul,
Till the tree die!

And now we see, that if all the sympathetic feelings of her heart were not capable of being extinguished in grief for the loss of her husband, neither can they be absorbed in her over-joy for his recovery. It is not, in fact, those individual attachments which are the most exclusively engrossing to the feelings, that are either the warmest or the firmest. Such all-absorbing devotions are much rather indicative of a narrow heart and a petty mind. Generous love, when it takes possession of a noble heart, guided by an enlightened understanding, much rather opens it to a keener sense and a wider capacity for every other benevolent sympathy,—makes it overflow with more genial good-will to all with whom it stands in any kindly relation. So soon as Imogen has solicited her

father's blessing, she turns first to her brothers, in reply to her father's remark upon their restoration—"Oh, Imogen, thou hast lost by this a kingdom":—

> No, my lord;
> I have got two worlds by't. Oh, my gentle brothers,
> Have we thus met? Oh, never say hereafter,
> But I am truest speaker: you call'd me brother,
> When I was but your sister; I you brothers,
> When you were so indeed!

Then to Belarius—

> You are my father, too; and did relieve me,
> To see this gracious season.

And her last words are to Lucius—

> My good master,
> I will yet do you service.

Indeed, one sentence in the mouth of Cymbeline tells us emphatically the proud station of Imogen at the close of the drama, as the uniting centre of all the benevolent sympathies which are there brought together:—

> See,
> Posthumus anchors upon Imogen;
> And she, like harmless lightning, throws her eye
> On him, her brothers, me, her master; hitting
> Each object with a joy: the counterchange
> Is severally in all!

Even Posthumus's forgiveness of Iachimo, and Cymbeline's pacification with the Romans, serve but to grace the triumph of the nobly and intelligently sympathetic heart of the heroine. The very oracle has made the peace and prosperity of Britain to depend upon the recognizing and rewarding of her generous affection and unshaken constancy. The Roman soothsayer may declare with propriety,

> The fingers of the powers above do tune
> The harmony of this peace:

but the instrument through which they tune it is, the harmonious soul of Imogen!

We leave this full examination into Shakespeare's own conception and developement of what would

seem to have been the most fondly laboured of all his ideally feminine personations, to make its due impression upon the reader's mind. An attentive perusal of it, we are persuaded, will enable him to dispose for himself of any estimate of this great character so inadequate as that, for instance, wherewith Mrs. Jameson closes her account of it;—"On the whole, Imogen is a lovely compound of goodness, truth, and affection, with *just so much* of passion and intellect and poetry, as serve to lend to the picture that power and glowing richness of effect which it would otherwise have wanted."

Neither can any more signal instance be adduced to confute the position which Hazlitt, singularly enough, bases upon his consideration of this very character:—"It is the peculiar excellence of Shakespeare's heroines, that they seem to exist *only in their attachment to others*. They are *pure abstractions of the affections*. No one ever hit *the true perfection of the female character, the sense of weakness leaning on the strength of its affections for support*, so well as Shakespeare." Poor Imogen!—strong as her affections are, had she no strength *but* theirs to sustain her, she must have sunk again and again!

The more we reflect upon these criticisms, the more we deem it a great moral object, to rescue so exalted an ideal character of Shakespeare from such injurious depreciation—an object only second in importance to vindicating the dignity of a great historical character. The question—what was the conception entertained by Shakespeare, as to the highest standard of female grace, virtue, and intellect?—is, we repeat, hardly less momentous than it is interesting.

One word more. The nobler and richer the ideal portrait sketched by the dramatist, the greater ever is the task, not only of expression, but of completion, in a kindred spirit of art, imposed upon its histrionic representative. With the characters of Shakespeare this is transcendently the case. In a following paper, therefore, while speaking in general of that late re-

production of 'Cymbeline' at Drury-Lane, which merits far greater attention and encouragement than the public have yet afforded it, we shall be more especially called upon to draw whatever supplementary illustration we find to be derivable from the present personation of Imogen.

4.—ON THE ACTING OF THIS PLAY, AS LATELY REVIVED AT DRURY-LANE; AND CHIEFLY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PART OF IMOGEN.

[April 15th, 1843.]

We proceed, for the purpose of illustrating more thoroughly the beauties unfolded in the dramatic developement of the character of Imogen, to consider the personation of it by Miss Helen Faucit, its present representative on the boards of Drury-Lane.

By her appropriate manner of delivering that sagacious reflection—"Oh, dissembling courtesy," &c. —which forms the very opening of the part, this actress gives at once that tone of dignity, moral and intellectual, as well as of person and of rank—that unaffected majesty of mind, as well as bearing—the accustomed absence of which, in the commonplace conception of the character, has deprived even its exquisite sweetness of its most delicious charm. Her Imogen forgets not for a moment that, in person and character, she is to be no less "the noble" than "the sweet." She makes us feel this throughout—no less in the tender parting scene with her husband, and her kind communings respecting him with her delicately affectionate servant, than in her vindication of her own conduct against her father's injustice, and

her rebuking of the vulgar contempt heaped by her odious suitor upon her banished lord.

Her scene with Iachimo demands a more particular consideration, for it is here that those storms begin to assail the inmost heart of the heroine, which are to heave it so deeply through the rest of the drama. Here, too, it is that Imogen's representative is first called upon for a large display of that mute acting which constitutes so much of the most delicate and difficult execution belonging to this part, seeing that the actress has to personate, almost throughout the scene, a most interested and most agitated *listener*. From the commencement of Iachimo's exclamations of affected abstraction, begins that course of silent but expressive acting which calls for the highest qualities of the performer, consisting as it does of such variety, such fine gradation, of delicate yet significant touches.

And now it is that the eye of the auditor, if he would apprehend the inmost spirit of the scene, should be intently fixed upon every gesture, upon every the slightest change of countenance, in the heroine's representative. Here, if ever on the present stage, will he be made to feel how much there is of the noble and the exquisite in Shakespeare's dramatic creations, that cannot be realised in the closet. He will be vividly reminded of the fact which we emphatically indicated in commencing these critical notices—that Shakespeare dramatised, not to a *reading*, but to a *seeing* and *hearing* public,—and that for this reason chiefly, amongst others, the more thoroughly any reader shall have possessed himself of the true spirit and meaning of any portion of Shakespeare's dramatic text, the more will he be in a condition to receive that additional and crowning illustration which no critic or commentator can give him—which can only come from the performer whom Nature and Shakespeare have themselves inspired, and which is indispensable to realise that living and breathing creation which each of these dramas *primarily* was in the mind of its author. Nor is it because we can never hope,

any more than he himself could ever expect it, to see any one of his dramatic works completely rendered to us by an adequate personation of all its characters, that we should neglect to derive such scattered illustrations as even a very imperfect theatrical representation may afford us. Speaking from the experience of our own heart and mind, we should say that the more earnestly and cordially any reader shall have applied himself to follow up the dramatic spirit and expression of any one of our great poet's productions, to the utmost limit to which the verbal text can lead him, the more thankfully will he repair to the scene where he may be gratified and instructed by that far more complete, more vivid and precise expression which the truly inspired actor or actress will always convey to him—even though that perfectness of expression should be confined to a single character in any given play; and in this spirit it is that we return to an attentive consideration of Miss Faucit's acting in the first great scene of 'Cymbeline.'

Here, especially, we find the advantage of this lady's figure, and the dignity which pervades her conception of the part. To this scene, above all others, the absence of these requisites would be peculiarly fatal. They are demanded by its every circumstance; but we see more particularly the truth and force which they lend to Iachimo's expressions of admiration upon first beholding the princess; for we must be permitted to observe, that although the mental powers of a performer can do a great deal in overcoming personal disadvantages, no amount of them would be enough to overcome the absurdity, for instance, of Iachimo's exclamation, "All of her that is out of door most rich!" &c., addressed to an actress of ungraceful or undignified aspect, whether as to manner or to figure. Nevertheless, it is far more important, as well as interesting, to trace in the performer the intellectual powers and graces—the nice and just discrimination of those rapidly rising or sinking gradations of feeling

which pass over the heroine's heart, from the beginning of Iachimo's exclamations to the end of his retractation —which, as we have remarked already, the actress is here called upon to render, much less by the brief words that drop from her lips in the intervals of Iachimo's speeches, than by that mute expressiveness of figure as well as feature, which is so familiar to the consideration of every true physiognomist, as well as to every genuine professor of histrionic art.

After shewing us, then, in the opening of the scene, that unalterable dignity of the woman, noble in mind yet more than in station, which is requisite to prevent the soliloquy,—

> A father cruel and a stepdame false, &c.—

from degenerating into merely weak and querulous complaining,—and her sudden joy at receiving the news from her husband, and grateful cordiality towards the bearer, from taking the commonplace character of a childish fondness and thankfulness,—this actress proceeds through the first great trial of her more delicate skill, in exhibiting to us the changing and deepening impressions which Iachimo's exclamations and disclosures make upon Imogen's mind, until it sinks oppressed by the full consciousness of her husband's falsehood. In the varying aspect of the performer, we read, successively, the look of mere surprise at his first exclamation, "What! are men mad?"—that of enquiring interest at his rumination upon the difference "'twixt two such shes;"—the anxious curiosity as his meaning begins to unfold itself—deepening into the most painful concern when she is told how her lord "laughs from's free lungs" at those who believe in feminine constancy;—and so on, by the nicest gradations, to that appealing look, and gesture of unutterably agonizing suspense, with which she urges him,—

> Since doubting things go ill, often hurts more
> Than to be sure they do,—

to declare explicitly what is the matter. Then, see

the whole expression of that face and figure, thus wound up to the highest pitch of painful expectation, relaxing gradually, yet rapidly, under Iachimo's direct intimation of her lord's infidelity, "Had I this cheek," &c.—until we trace, in their look of blank and utter desolation, that dying of the heart which prompts the faint ejaculation, "My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain!"

The bursting into tears with the exclamation, "Revenged! how should I be revenged?" so naturally expressing the first convulsive effort which the overcharged heart makes to relieve itself, gives also the fuller effect to that sudden transition of idea and of feeling which takes place in her mind, while she listens to the few brief sentences that convey Iachimo's most unexpected and most insulting proposal. Here we think that Miss Faucit's mute acting is peculiarly happy. The sudden passing away of the whole cloud that has gathered over Imogen's mind and heart,—the silent conviction so instantly wrought within her, that the man addressing her is a villain,—are vividly and beautifully set before us, in that withdrawing of the hands from the weeping face, that gradual elevating of the depressed brow, and recovery of the drooping form, till they reach that thorough clearness of the countenance and firmness of the figure with which she delivers her first call to Pisanio. So far, however, we are come only to the look and tone of prompt decision. That one step further of Iachimo's, "Let me my service tender on your lips," raises, most properly, both the look, and voice, and attitude of the actress to a pitch of proudly and even fiercely indignant expression, the contrast of which to the habitual gentleness, not tameness, of manner in Imogen's representative, is in strict accordance with the contrast which the indignant bitterness of the speech, "Away! I do condemn mine ears," &c., presents to the tone of the heroine's ordinary language. This particular passage is one of those which display to the highest advantage those characteristic powers of this lady as a Shakespearian performer, which we have had occasion to point out in a former notice of her acting.

Again, the relaxing of the whole aspect, in the course of Iachimo's apologetic retractation, until it reaches the dignified complacency with which she says, "All's well, sir: take my power i' the court for yours," requires no less delicacy of discrimination and execution than is demanded by all the earlier parts of the scene. And in the verbal text of the dialogue that follows, there is nothing beyond the difference between "You are *kindly* welcome" and "You are *very* welcome," to mark the difference of manner which undoubtedly the dramatist conceived his heroine as displaying, notwithstanding her recovered good-will towards her Italian visitor, after his presumptuous experiment. Here, again, we regard Miss Faucit's performance as truly illustrating that implied blending of the graceful pride of offended delicacy with the kind complacency of a generous forgiveness.

So far as violent revulsion of feeling can make it so, the passage where Imogen reads the letter from her husband commanding Pisanio to kill her, is the most arduous of all in this diversified part. To have her joyful anticipation of the affectionate meeting with her beloved lord checked at its height by a communication like this—what a shock of feeling for the actress to represent, with no more precise indication to guide her than Pisanio's exclamation—

> What shall I need to draw my sword?—The paper
> Hath cut her throat already!

In expressing to us the stunning blow given to the adoring wife by the very first words, "Thy mistress, Pisanio, hath played the strumpet in my bed;" the staggering and faltering of her eye and voice, in sheer bewildered incredulity, until she comes to the murderous command, "Let thine own hands take away her life;" the fainting away of her accents at the close, under the withering conviction that her eyes have not deceived her, but that her calamity is real; the sinking senseless to the ground; and the hysterical reviving;—in all these the actress has had nothing

to direct her but her own instinct as to the true spirit of the character and the situation. That instinct, we think, has directed her aright, leaving us indebted to her for so much genuine illustration of the dramatist's conception.

And here, in justice to the performer, we must point out a certain misconception as to the predominant spirit of this scene, which her judgment has led her to avoid. Mrs. Jameson, for example, tells us, in relation to it, that, after Imogen's "affecting lamentation over the falsehood and injustice of her husband," "she then resigns herself to his will with the most entire submission." The critic here falls into the error of making Imogen desire Pisanio to "do his master's bidding," simply from a motive of *obedience* to the will of a man whom she is all the while so emphatically assuring us that she feels called upon to regard with indignant pity. This, however, is but one instance of the mistakes occasioned by the low estimate of Imogen's character, in her conjugal relation, which has been so unaccountably prevalent among the critics; abasing her from her proper station as a noble, generous, and intellectual woman, whose understanding has sanctioned the election of her heart, to that of a creature blindly impassioned and affectionate, ready to submit quite passively to any enormity of indignity and injustice inflicted upon her by the man to whom she has devoted herself. The present actress of the character makes herself no party to this degradation. The most nobly characteristic passages which she ought to deliver in this scene are, indeed, struck out, on the principle, no doubt, of indispensable saving of time, especially the grand one cited in our last paper:—

> Though those that are betray'd
> Do feel the treason sharply, &c.

But it is plain that she has studied them attentively; and so has raised her conception and expression of the heroine's character, as shown in this trying situation,

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to that noble elevation which the poet has so clearly indicated. She gives the true *dignity* of tone, as well as the true *feeling*, to every sentence;—the pathetic indignation with which the slandered wife first repels the charge,—

> False to his bed!—what is it to be false?—

the deep grief with which she feels herself compelled to retort it,—

> Iachimo,
> Thou didst accuse him of incontinency, &c.;—

and then, the intensity of despair, *not the excess of mean, slavish submission*, which dictates that most affecting appeal,—

> Come, fellow, be thou honest, &c.

By delivering the words, "A little witness my obedience," in that tone of pathetic irony which shews how truly she apprehends the meaning of what follows:—

> Look!
> I draw the sword myself: take it, and hit
> The innocent mansion of my love, my heart.
> Fear not; 'tis empty of all things but grief:
> Thy master *is not* there; who *was*, indeed,
> The riches of it.—

she makes us feel convincingly, that it is from no submissiveness to the unjust will of him whom her heart at this moment *rejects*, but from the very extremity of heart-rending anguish that *his* heart should have so revolted from her as to be capable of issuing such a command, that she exclaims,—

> Pr'ythee, despatch!
> *The lamb entreats the butcher.* Where's thy knife?
> Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding,
> *When I desire it too.*

It may be readily inferred—even by readers who have had no opportunity of witnessing this lady's personation—that the union of grace, dignity, and intelligence, which we have pointed out as qualifying her so peculiarly for the representation of Shakespeare's more ideal heroines, is especially conspicuous

in imparting to the scenes of Imogen in her male disguise, that characteristic charm which we indicated in our preceding paper. Nevertheless, it is due to the actress to mention this emphatically—evincing as it does that exquisitely feminine nature in the performer which is indispensable for interpreting the most perfect of Shakespeare's feminine creations.

Still, one of the greatest tests which this drama affords of the truth and delicacy both of conception and expression in the actress, appears to us to be the share assigned her in that great concluding scene, from the moment when Imogen recognizes the diamond on Iachimo's finger, to that where the latter restores the stolen bracelet; for here, perhaps, it is, in all the part, that the poet has imposed on the performer the most of that task of *completion*, which we indicated at the close of our foregoing paper. Here, again, the world of anxious, and then delighted feelings, which, in that interval, rush in rapid succession upon the heroine's heart, while for the most part she is a silent auditor, are rather suggested than expressed in the mere text of the dramatist. The tide of happy affections that flows back so plenteously into the lately desolate bosom of Imogen, have to be rendered to us by the actress, for the most part, independently of any direct indications afforded by the dialogue.

Here we must express our regret at the omission, in the present acting, of that affecting passage which forms the proper starting-point of this interesting *dénouement*. The Roman commander, Lucius, after begging of the conqueror the life of his affectionate page, is expecting that the latter will avail himself of Cymbeline's offer, of granting him any boon he may desire, even though he "do demand a prisoner, the noblest ta'en," to ask in return the life of his generous master:—

> I do not bid thee beg my life, good lad;
> And yet, I know, thou wilt.

And, at this moment, the auditor feels as if he knew

so too; for all that he has learned both of the character and the circumstances of Imogen, leads him inevitably to this conclusion. Her husband being, she supposes, dead,—her servant treacherous,—her father, though present to her eyes, yet lost to her heart,—the only ray of sympathy that beams upon her soul amid the settled gloom of its deep though calm despair, is that which she finds in the paternal kindness of the noble Roman. Can Imogen, then, do otherwise than petition for his life? Yes; for,

> Alack,
> There's other work in hand.

Upon the finger of the captive Iachimo she has recognized the consecrated jewel, even that "diamond that was her mother's," which when she had last beheld it, her beloved Leonatus was putting on his finger, saying,

> Remain, remain thou here,
> While sense can keep it on!

Again, therefore, her doubts are cruelly awakened as to her deceased lord's fidelity—

> I see a thing
> Bitter to me as death!

And the craving of her heart for the final solution of this horrible enigma, makes her eagerly forego the last human tie that slenderly binds her to existence—

> Your life, good master,
> Must shuffle for itself.

This explicit rejection of the opportunity to save her "good master's" life, should be retained in acting, to give, as we have hinted before, its full effect to the intensity of interest with which she looks upon the ring.

From the beginning, however, of Iachimo's confession, the countenance and gesture of the present performer express to us, in their delicate variation, what Shakespeare's text can but dimly suggest, even to the most thoughtful and imaginative reader. In them we trace, in vivid succession, the intensely fixed

attention of the heroine to the commencement of Iachimo's narrative,—the trembling anxiety as it proceeds,—the tenderly mournful delight on receiving the full conviction of her husband's fidelity,—and then, the grateful, tearful, overpowering joy, on seeing him so suddenly alive, and hearing his repentant exclamations,—and that most difficult, perhaps, as it is the most pathetic stroke of all, the coming forward, forgetful of her male disguise, to discover herself to him, and relieve him from that intolerable anguish which her generous heart can no longer endure to contemplate. We might dwell upon the charming expression given to the words—

Why did you throw your wedded lady from you? &c.—

but that we regard as a higher merit in this actress her power of entering so thoroughly into that affectionate nature of Imogen, which makes even her sudden restoration to conjugal happiness but cause her bosom to overflow with grateful benevolence towards every one who has any claim to share it. Many a woman, we are persuaded, would be found capable of adequately representing to us, in such a scene, the gratified feelings of the lover or the wife, for one that could render, with a truth at once so genial and so delicate, the passage, for instance, where Imogen goes up to her brothers, and expresses her delight at their restoration to her:—

> Oh, my gentle brothers,
> Have we thus met? Oh, never say hereafter,
> But I am truest speaker: you call'd me brother
> When I was but your sister; I you brothers,
> When you were so indeed!

We cannot call to mind anything more full of affectionate grace, than the tone and gesture with which these lines are delivered by this heroine's present representative.

The queen, the wicked stepmother of Imogen—the "woman that bears all down with her brain"—the "crafty devil," "hourly coining plots"—the hypocritical and systematic assassin—is personated by

Miss Ellis, who, we are bound to remark, affects a juvenility of dress in this part, which, how well soever it may become her as a woman, is quite inconsistent with that sinister and formidable gravity which Shakespeare has assigned to this personage. We are little inclined to enter into criticism of theatrical costume, except where we find some error which is offensive no less to reason than to taste. In the present instance, the impropriety in question appears peculiarly glaring in the actress who represents the mother of so mature-looking a Cloten as the one personated by Mr. Compton; while, on the other hand, it tends greatly to destroy the dramatic contrast which Shakespeare has, in every respect, so strongly drawn between the youthful princess and the queen mature in years and wickedness.

Mr. Compton's personation of the booby prince has the merit of being consistent throughout, and possesses genuine humour. Neither do we doubt that he has considered the part in that spirit which enables *his peculiar powers* to make it the most effective. It is not, therefore, with a view to cast censure on him in his professional capacity, but simply to obviate misconception in the auditor's mind as to the dramatist's true meaning, that we state our own conviction that Shakespeare has clearly indicated his conception of "that harsh, simple, noble nothing," as Imogen so expressively terms him on one occasion, or "that irregulous devil," as she calls him on another, —as being no habitually solemn coxcomb, as Mr. Compton represents him, but a much more bouncing, blustering sort of fool. We hear him told by one of his attendant lords, "you are most *hot* and *furious* when you win:" and certainly, from the mouth of his representative on the stage, we ought to hear "the snatches in his voice, and burst of speaking," which Belarius tells us were so habitual with him. Here, again, the general effect of the drama suffers, from the substitution of a grave booby for that more petulantly awkward coxcomb, who must be more irritatingly

odious to a woman endowed with Imogen's peculiarly harmonious grace of mind as well as person.

On the present acting of Posthumus, we shall make no comment—only observing, that all possible *dignity* of figure, of countenance, and of bearing, should be given to this personation, even in its most impassioned passages, in order to sustain in any adequate degree our sympathy in the interest which this personage possesses in the breast of a heroine so ideally exalted; the more so, as the mental and moral qualities of Leonatus, though not unworthy of Imogen's affection, are yet distinctly portrayed by the dramatist as inferior to her own.

On Mr. Macready's performance of Iachimo, however, we venture one word of remark. The actor, we think, has here done his very best: his conception is spirited; his execution, brilliant and effective. The performer seems to have well understood how to adapt the *histrionic* reading of the part to the displaying of his peculiar capabilities to the best advantage; and so stands professionally absolved for any inevitable deviation from the dramatist's conception into which he may thus have been led. Least of all are we entitled to quarrel with Iachimo's representative because, both in figure and in feature, so far from having anything of an Italian look, he is thoroughly and peculiarly British. Nevertheless, the auditor must not be betrayed, by what he sees on the boards of Drury-Lane, into forgetting that "*yellow* Iachimo" of whom Posthumus so emphatically tells us in his first soliloquy. This epithet naturally reminds us of that clear, sallow complexion which we see, so transparent and so life-like, in Titian's portraits—that genuine Italian hue with which we commonly associate slenderness of feature and pliancy of figure. It is, above all, in Iachimo's great scene with Imogen, that we feel the want of a truer personation of the artfully insinuating Roman.

That blending of earnestness of devotion with delicacy of feeling, which we have indicated as forming

the groundwork of the character of Pisanio, is, we think, rendered with truth in the present performance by Mr. Elton; the actor is well identified with the part he is enacting; so that, of all the greater tragic scenes, that in which Pisanio discloses to Imogen the commission he has received to murder her, is the one most completely brought home to the feelings of the audience.

As affecting the truth and beauty of the scenes where Imogen is wandering in disguise, we must point out a considerable error as to costume in the present acting of the play. Shakespeare's text affords no warrant whatever for representing Belarius and the two young brothers, in their exterior, as a sort of half-naked savages. They inhabit a cave, it is true: but so, for instance, does the banished duke in 'As You Like It,' who, the play tells us, was living "like the old Robin Hood of England." Belarius himself is a noble exile, living, disguised, in the condition of an outlaw. Under the homely but not savage garb in which he ought to be represented, he should preserve the dignified and even graceful bearing of the man who had been long a courtier as well as a distinguished warrior. Only such a man could give to the young princes, even in his now rustic way of life, such a training as could fit them to attract so immediately the affection of a being so peculiarly graceful as Imogen.

IV.

CHARACTERS IN 'MACBETH.'

[March 1st, 1844.]

1.—MACBETH AND LADY MACBETH, UNTIL THE MURDER OF DUNCAN.

'MACBETH' seems inspired by the very genius of the tempest. This drama shews us the gathering, the discharge, and the dispelling of a domestic and political storm, which takes its peculiar hue from the individual character of the hero. It is not in the spirit of mischief that animates the "weird sisters," nor in the passionate and strong-willed ambition of Lady Macbeth, that we find the mainspring of this tragedy, but in the disproportioned though poetically tempered soul of Macbeth himself. A character like his, of extreme selfishness, with a most irritable fancy, must produce, even in ordinary circumstances, an excess of morbid apprehensiveness; which, however, as we see in him, is not inconsistent with the greatest physical courage, but generates of necessity the most entire moral cowardice. When, therefore, a man like this, ill enough qualified even for the honest and straightforward transactions of life, has brought himself to snatch at an ambitious object by the commission of one great sanguinary crime, the new and false position in which he finds himself by his very success will but

startle and exasperate him to escape, as Macbeth says, from "horrible imaginings," by the perpetration of greater and greater actual horrors, till inevitable destruction comes upon him, amidst universal execration. Such, briefly, are the story and the moral of 'Macbeth.' The passionate ambition and indomitable will of his lady, though agents indispensable to urge such a man to the one decisive act which is to compromise him in his own opinion and that of the world, are by no means primary springs of the dramatic action. Nor do 'the weird sisters' themselves do more than aid collaterally in impelling a man, the inherent evil of whose nature and purpose has predisposed him to take their equivocal suggestions in the most mischievous sense. And, finally, the very thunder-cloud which, from the beginning almost to the ending, wraps this fearful tragedy in physical darkness and lurid glare, does but reflect and harmonize with the moral blackness of the piece. Such is the magic power of creative genius—such the unerring instinct of sovereign art!

On the one hand, such very serious moral considerations are involved in forming a right estimate of each of the two leading characters in this peculiarly romantic and terrific tragedy, and of their mutual relation; while, on the other, so much critical misconception has been circulated respecting them, and so much theatrical misrepresentation still daily falsifies them to the apprehension of the auditor; that we find it incumbent on us to make our examination of the matter very full and elaborate.

It is remarkable enough that, while it has been usual to judge, we think too harshly, regarding the moral dignity of a character like Hamlet's for instance, a sort of respectful sympathy has been got up for Macbeth, such as, we are well persuaded, the dramatist himself never intended to awaken. Misled in this direction, Hazlitt, for example, tells us, in the course of his rapid parallel between the character of Macbeth and that of Richard the Third:—"Macbeth is full of

'the milk of human kindness,' is frank, sociable, generous. He is tempted to the commission of guilt by golden opportunities, by the instigations of his wife, and by prophetic warnings. Fate and metaphysical aid conspire against his virtue and his loyalty." Let us proceed to examine, by the very sufficient light of Shakespeare's text, and by that alone, how far this view of Macbeth's character is just, on the one hand, towards the hero himself and to the other leading personages of the drama,—on the other, to the poet's own fame, whether as a dramatist or a moralist.

The very starting-point for an inquiry into the real, inherent, and habitual nature of Macbeth, independent of those particular circumstances which form the action of the play, lies manifestly, though the critics have commonly overlooked it, in the question,—With whom does the scheme of usurping the Scottish crown by the murder of Duncan actually originate? We sometimes find Lady Macbeth talked of as if she were the first contriver of the plot and suggester of the assassination; but this notion is refuted, not only by implication, in the whole tenor of the piece, but most explicitly by that particular passage where the lady, exerting "the valour of her tongue" to fortify her husband's wavering purpose, answers his objection—

> I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more, is none;—

by saying—

> What beast was it, then,
> *That made you break this enterprise to me?*
> . . . . . Nor time nor place
> Did then adhere, *and yet you would make both*, &c.

More commonly, however, the *witches* (as we find the "weird sisters" pertinaciously miscalled by all sorts of players and of critics) have borne the imputation of being the first to put this piece of mischief in the hero's mind. Thus, for instance, Hazlitt, in

the account of this play from which we have already made one quotation, adopts Lamb's view of the relation between Macbeth and the *witches*, as expressed in one of the notes to his 'Specimens of Early Dramatic Poetry.' "Shakespeare's witches," says Lamb, speaking of them in comparison with those of Middleton (that is, comparing two things between which there is neither affinity nor analogy), "originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination."

Yet the prophetic words in which the attainment of royalty is promised him, contain not the remotest hint as to the means by which he is to arrive at it. They are simply—

> All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter;—

an announcement which, it is plain, should have rather inclined a man who was *not* already harbouring a scheme of guilty ambition, to wait quietly the course of events, saying to himself, as even Macbeth observes, while ruminating on this prediction,—

> If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
> Without my stir.

So that, according to Macbeth's own admission, the words of the weird sisters on this occasion convey anything rather than an incitement to murder to the mind of a man who is not meditating it already. "This supernatural soliciting" is only made such to the mind of Macbeth by the fact that he is already occupied with a purpose of assassination. This is the true answer to the question which he here puts to himself:—

> *Why* do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings!
> *My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,*
> Shakes so my single state of man, that function
> Is smother'd in surmise; and nothing is,
> But what is not!

How, then, does Macbeth really stand before us at the very opening of the drama? We see in him a near kinsman of "the gracious Duncan," occupying the highest place in the favour and confidence of his king and relative,—a warrior of the greatest prowess, employed in suppressing a dangerous rebellion and repelling a foreign invader, aided also by the treachery of that thane of Cawdor whose forfeited honours the grateful king bestows on his successful general. Yet all the while this man, so actively engaged in putting down other traitors, cherishes against his king, kinsman, and benefactor, a purpose of tenfold blacker treason than any of those against which he has been defending him—the purpose, not suggested to him by any one, but gratuitously and deliberately formed within his own breast, of murdering his royal kinsman with his own hand, in order, by that means, to usurp his crown. With every motive to loyalty and to gratitude, yet his lust of power is so eager and so inordinate, as to overcome every opposing consideration of honour, principle, and feeling. To understand aright the true spirit and moral of this great tragedy, it is most important that the reader or auditor should be well impressed at the outset with the conviction how bad a man, independently of all instigation from others, Macbeth must have been, to have once conceived such a design under such peculiar circumstances.

The first thing that strikes us in such a character is, the intense selfishness—the total absence both of sympathetic feeling and moral principle,—and the consequent incapability of remorse in the proper sense of the term. So far from finding any check to his design in the fact that the king bestows on him the forfeited title of the traitorous thane of Cawdor as an especial mark of confidence in his loyalty, this only serves to whet his own villanous purpose. The dramatist has brought this forcibly home to us, by one of his master-strokes of skill, in the passage where he makes Macbeth first enter the king's presence at

the very moment when the latter is reflecting on the repentant end of the executed thane:—

Duncan. *There's no art*
To find the mind's construction in the face;
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An *absolute* trust.

Then to Macbeth, as he enters:—

O worthiest cousin!
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before,
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserv'd,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
Might have been mine!—only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.
Macb. The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
Is to receive our duties: and our duties
Are, to your throne and state, children and servants;
Which do but what they should, by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour.
Dun. Welcome hither:
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing. . . . . .
. . . . . From hence to Inverness,
And bind us further to you.
Macb. The rest is labour, which is not us'd for you;
I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach;
So, humbly take my leave.
Dun. My worthy Cawdor!
Macb. (aside). . . . . . Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires:
The eye wink at the hand! yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. [*Exit.*
Dun. True, worthy Banquo; he is full so valiant;
And in his commendations I am fed;
It is a banquet to me. Let us after him,
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:
It is a peerless kinsman!

Here, surely, is a depth of cold-blooded treachery which is truly immeasurable—seeing that the "peerless kinsman" is really gone before to "make joyful the hearing of his wife" with the news that they are to have immediately the wished-for opportunity of

murdering their worthy kinsman and sovereign. It is from no "compunctious visiting of nature," but from sheer *moral cowardice*—from fear of *retribution in this life*—that we find Macbeth shrinking, at the last moment, from the commission of this enormous crime. This will be seen the more, the more attentively we consider his soliloquy:—

> If it were *done* when 'tis done, then 't were *well*
> It were done quickly. If the assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
> With his surcease, success; that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of time—
> We'd jump the life to come. But, in these cases,
> We still have judgment here; that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips.——He's here in double trust;
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
> Who should against his murderer shut the door,
> Not bare the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels trumpet-tongu'd, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off;
> And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim hors'd
> Upon the sightless coursers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind.

Again, to Lady Macbeth:—

> We will proceed no further in this business:
> He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
> Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
> Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
> Not cast aside so soon.

In all this we trace a most clear consciousness of the impossibility that he should find of masking his guilt from the public eye,—the odium which must consequently fall upon him in the opinions of men,—and the retribution which it would probably bring upon him. But here is no evidence of true *moral* repugnance—and as little of any religious scruple—

We'd jump the life to come.

The dramatist, by this brief but significant parenthesis, has taken care to leave us in no doubt on a point so momentous towards forming a due estimate of the conduct of his hero. However, he feels, as we see, the dissuading motives of worldly prudence in all their force. But one devouring passion urges him on—the master-passion of his life—the lust of power:

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent; but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself,
And falls, &c.

Still, it should seem that the considerations of policy and safety regarding this life might ever have withheld him from the actual commission of the murder, had not the spirit of his wife come in to fortify his failing purpose. At all events, in the action of the drama it is her intervention, most decidedly, that terminates his irresolution, and urges him to the final perpetration of the crime which he himself had been the first to meditate. It therefore becomes necessary to consider Lady Macbeth's own character in its leading peculiarities.

It has been customary to talk of Lady Macbeth as of a woman in whom the love of power for its own sake not only predominates over, but almost excludes, every human affection, every sympathetic feeling. But the more closely the dramatic developement of this character is examined, the more fallacious, we believe, this view of the matter will be found. Had Shakespeare intended so to represent her, he would probably have made her the first contriver of the assassination scheme. For our own part, we regard the very passage which has commonly been quoted as decisive that personal and merely selfish ambition is her all-absorbing motive, as proving in reality quite the contrary. It is true that even Coleridge* desires us to remark that, in her opening scene, "she evinces

* 'Literary Remains,' vol. ii. p. 244.

no womanly life, no wifely joy, at the return of her husband, no pleased terror at the thought of his past dangers." We must, however, beg to observe, that she shews what she knows to be far more gratifying to her husband at that moment, the most eager and passionate sympathy in the great master wish and purpose of his own mind. Has it ever been contended that Macbeth shews none of the natural and proper feelings of a husband, because their common scheme of murderous ambition forms the whole burden of his letter which she has been perusing just before their meeting? In this epistle, be it well observed, after announcing to her the twofold prediction of the weird sisters, and its partial fulfilment, he concludes:—"This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness; that thou mightest not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell." Can anything more clearly denote a thorough union between this pair, in affection as well as ambition, than that single expression, *My dearest partner of greatness?* And, seeing that his last words to her had contained the injunction to lay their promised greatness to her heart as her chief subject of rejoicing, are not the first words that she addresses to him on their meeting, the most natural, sympathetic, and even obedient response to the charge which he has given her?—

> Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
> Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
> Thy letters have transported me beyond
> This ignorant present, and I feel now
> The future in the instant!

We do maintain that there is no less of affectionate than of ambitious feeling conveyed in these lines,—nay more, that it is her prospect of *his* exaltation, chiefly, that draws from her this burst of passionate anticipation, breathing almost a lover's ardour. Everything, we say, concurs to shew that, primarily, she cherishes the scheme of criminal usurpation as *his*

object—the attainment of which, she mistakenly believes, will render him happier as well as greater;—for it must be carefully borne in mind that, while Macbeth wavers as to the adoption of the means, his longing for the object itself is constant and increasing, so that his wife sees him growing daily more and more uneasy and restless under this unsatisfied craving. His own previous words and conduct, as laid before us in the first scenes of the drama, prove the truth of her statement of the matter in her first soliloquy:—

> Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, 'Thus thou must do, if thou have me',
> And *that which rather thou dost fear to do*
> *Than wishest should be undone.*

Her sense of the miserable state of his mind, between his strengthening desire and his increasing irresolution, is yet more forcibly unfolded in that subsequent scene where she says to him:—

> Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour,
> As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,—
> Or live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*,
> Like the poor cat i' the adage?

She is fully aware, indeed, of the moral guiltiness of her husband's design—that he "would wrongly win;" and of the suspicion which they are likely to incur, but the dread of which she repels by considering, "What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?" Nor is she inaccessible to remorse. The very passionateness of her wicked invocation, "Come, come, you spirits," &c., is a proof of this. We have not here the language of a cold-blooded murderess—but the vehement effort of uncontrollable desire, to silence the "still, small voice" of her human and feminine conscience. This very violence results from the resistance of that "milk of human kindness" in *her own* bosom, of which she fears the operation in her husband's breast:—

Stop up the access and passage to *remorse*,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it!

Of religious impressions, indeed, it should be carefully noted that she seems to have even less than her husband.

On the other hand, it is plain that she covets the crown for her husband even more eagerly than he desires it for himself. With as great or greater vehemence of passion than he, she has none of his excitable imagination. Herein, we conceive, lies the second essential difference of character between them; from whence proceeds, by necessary consequence, that indomitable steadiness to a purpose on which her heart is once thoroughly bent, which so perfectly contrasts with the incurably fluctuating habit of mind in her husband. She covets for him, we say, "the golden round" more passionately even than he can covet it for himself,—nay, more so, it seems to us, than she would have coveted it for her own individual brows. Free from all the apprehensions conjured up by an irritable fancy—from all the "horrible imaginings" that beset Macbeth,—her promptness of decision and fixedness of will are proportioned to her intensity of desire; so that, although he has been the first contriver of the scheme, she has been the first to resolve immovably that it shall be carried into effect.

Fearing that "his nature" may shrink at the moment of execution, she determines, if necessary, to commit the murder with her own hand. Hence her invocation to the "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts," to "unsex" her, &c.; and hence that part of her reply to Macbeth's announcement of Duncan's visit:—

He that's coming
Must be provided for: and you shall put
This night's great business into *my* despatch;
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom!
. . . . . Only, look up clear—

To alter favour ever is to fear:
Leave all the rest to me. [*Exeunt.*

But now it is that all his previous apprehensions of odium and of retribution rise up to his imagination against the deed, in more terribly vivid and concentrated array; to oppose which he feels within him no positive stimulant but that of pure ambition. This finally proves insufficient; and he falls back to the counter-resolve, "We will proceed no further in this business." But he finds, immovably planted behind him, sarcastic reproof from the woman whom he loves, if he loves any human being,—and, which makes it most formidable of all, from the woman who, he knows, devotedly *loves him.* Her exordium is fearful enough:—

Was the hope drunk,
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?
And wakes it now to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time,
Such I account thy love.

Then comes the bitter imputation of moral cowardice:—

Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? &c.

And his effort to repel the charge—

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none,—

only serves to bring upon him, most deservedly, the withering and resistless retort:—

What *beast* was it, then,
That *made you break this enterprise to me?*
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves—and *that their fitness now*
Does unmake you.

This unanswerable sarcasm upon his (a man's and a soldier's) irresolution, is driven home with tenfold

force by the terrible illustration which she adds of her own (a woman's) inflexibility of will—"I have given suck," &c. No longer daring to plead his fear of public opinion, Macbeth now falls back upon his last remaining ground of objection, the possibility that their attempt may not succeed—

> If we should fail?—

Her quiet reply, "We fail," is every way most characteristic of the speaker,—expressing that moral firmness in herself which makes her quite prepared to endure the consequences of failure,—and, at the same time, conveying the most decisive rebuke of such moral cowardice in her husband as can make him recede from a purpose merely on account of the possibility of defeat—a possibility which, up to the very completion of their design, seems never absent from her own mind, though she finds it necessary to banish it from that of her husband:—

> But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
> And we'll *not* fail.

Up to this moment, let us observe, the precise mode of Duncan's assassination seems not be determined on, but is now first suggested to the vacillating mind of Macbeth by his self-possessed lady:—

> When Duncan is asleep
> (Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey
> Soundly invite him), his two chamberlains
> Will I with wine and wassel so convince,
> That memory, the warder of the brain,
> Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
> A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep
> Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,
> What cannot you and I perform upon
> The unguarded Duncan?—what not put upon
> His spongy officers? who *shall bear the guilt*
> Of our great quell.

Macbeth receives this as a sort of blessed revelation, shewing him the way out of his horrible perplexity. In admiration at his wife's ready ingenuity, as con-

trasted with his own want of masculine self-possession, he exclaims—

> Bring forth men-children only!
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males!

He eagerly seizes and improves her suggestion:—

> Will it not be receiv'd—
> When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two
> Of his own chamber, and us'd their very daggers—
> That they have done 't?
> *Lady M.* Who dares receive it other,
> As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar
> Upon his death?
> *Macb.* I am settled, and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible feat!—
> Away, and mock the time with fairest show—
> False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

That "courage" of his which not even her logic and her sarcasm combined could quite "screw to the sticking-place," wavers no longer, now that he feels assured of making *others* bear the imputation of his crime.

Still, he expects to be supported, in the act of murder, by her personal participation:—"When *we* have marked with blood those sleepy two . . . . and used their very daggers," &c. But, notwithstanding her invocation to the spirits of murder to fill her, "from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty;" —notwithstanding her assurance to Macbeth —

> I have given suck; and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn,
> As you have done to this;—

yet when she has "drugged the possets" of the chamberlains, and "laid their daggers ready," we find her own hand shrinking at the last moment from the act which she had certainly sworn to herself to perform,—and that from one of those very "com-

punctious visitings of nature" which she had so awfully deprecated in herself,—awakened, too, by an image which, however tender, is less pathetic to her woman's contemplation than the one presented by that extreme case which her last-cited speech supposes:—

> Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done 't.

So strong, after all, is "the milk of human kindness" against the fire of human passion and the iron of human will! And thus the sole performance of the murder still devolves upon the wicked but irresolute hand of the original assassin, Macbeth himself.

He has time, while waiting for the fatal summons which she is to give by striking on the bell, for one more "horrible imagining:"—

> Is this a dagger which I see before me? &c.
> . . . . . There's no such thing:
> It is the bloody business which informs
> Thus to mine eyes!

And no sooner is this vision dissipated, than his restless imagination runs on to picture most poetically the sublime horror of the present occasion:—

> Now o'er the one half world
> Nature seems dead, &c.

The sound of the bell dismisses him from these horrible fancies, to that which, to his mind, is the less horrible fact:—

> I go, and it is done, &c.

It is done, indeed. But the "horrible imaginings" of his anticipation are trivial compared to those which instantly spring from his ruminations on the perpetrated act:—

> Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more*, &c.

Sleep no more.—These brief words involve, we shall see, the whole history of our hero's subsequent career.

2.—MACBETH AND LADY MACBETH, AFTER THE MURDER OF DUNCAN.

In proceeding to consider the second grand phasis in the mutual developement of these remarkable characters, it is most important that we should not mistake the nature of Macbeth's nervous perturbation while in the very act of consummating his first great crime.

The more closely we examine it, the more we shall find it to be devoid of all genuine compunction. This character, as we have said before, is one of intense selfishness, and is therefore incapable of any true moral repugnance to inflicting injury upon others: it shrinks only from encountering public odium, and the retribution which that may produce. Once persuaded that these will be avoided, Macbeth falters not in proceeding to apply the dagger to the throat of his sleeping guest. But here comes the display of the other part of his character,—that extreme nervous irritability which, combined with active intellect, produces in him so much highly poetical rumination, —and at the same time, being unaccompanied with the slightest portion of self-command, subjects him to such signal moral cowardice. We feel bound the more earnestly to solicit the reader's attention to this distinction, since, though so clearly evident when once pointed out, it has escaped the penetration of some even of the most eminent critics. The poetry delivered by Macbeth, let us repeat, is not the poetry inspired by a glowing or even a feeling heart—it springs exclusively from a morbidly irritable fancy. We hesitate not to say, that his wife mistakes, when she apprehends that "the milk of human kindness" will prevent him from "catching the nearest way." The fact is that, until after the famous banquet scene,

as we shall have to shew in detail, she mistakes his character throughout. She judges of it too much from her own. Possessing generous feeling herself, she is susceptible of remorse. Full of self-control, and afflicted with no feverish imagination, she is dismayed by no vague apprehensions, no fantastic fears. Consequently, when her husband is withheld from his crime simply by that dread of contingent consequences which his fancy so infinitely exaggerates, she, little able to conceive of this, naturally ascribes some part of his repugnance to that "milk of human kindness," those "compunctious visitings of nature," of which she *can* conceive.

This double opposition between the two characters is yet more strikingly and admirably shown in the dialogue between them which immediately follows the murder. The perturbation which seizes Macbeth the instant he has struck the fatal blow, springs not, we repeat, from the slightest consideration for his victim. It is but the necessary recoil in the mind of every moral coward, upon the final performance of any decisive act from which accumulating selfish apprehensions have long withheld him,—heightened and exaggerated by that excessive morbid irritability which, after his extreme selfishness, forms the next great moral characteristic of Macbeth. It is the sense of *all* the *possible* consequences to *himself*, and that alone, which rushes instantly and overwhelmingly upon his excitable fancy, so as to thunder its denunciations in his very *ears*:—

> Methought I *heard* a voice cry, "Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep—the innocent sleep—
> Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
> The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast," . . . .
> Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house;
> "Glamis hath murder'd sleep; and therefore Cawdor
> Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

This fancied voice it is, that scares him from the scene of blood, and from taking the concerted pre-

caution for throwing the imputation upon Duncan's chamberlains,—not any compunction whatever as to implicating them in the assassination. "Function is smothered in surmise." His *instant* alarms for himself overpoweringly engross him. He listens at every chamber door as he withdraws,—until, finding himself, for the moment, safe from discovery, he lapses into his ill-timed rumination upon the nature and circumstances of the act he has just committed, which touch his fearful fancy vividly enough, but his heart not at all.

On the other hand, it is interesting to see how Lady Macbeth takes to *heart*, as he delivers them, the considerations which are suggested to his mind by his selfish *fears* alone. Impressed with the erroneous notion, drawn from the consciousness within her own breast, that he suffers real remorse, she at first endeavours to divert him from his reflections by assuming a tone of cool indifference. To his first exclamation, "This is a sorry sight!" she answers, "A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight." And when he goes on—"There's one did laugh in his sleep, and one cried, 'Murder!'" she merely observes, "There are two lodged together." But when, still running on, he says,—

> Listening their fear, I could not say, amen,
> When they did say, God bless us,—

she, interpreting as words of compunction the mere effusion of his selfish apprehensions, is moved to say, "Consider it not so deeply." And when his runaway imagination, merely urged on by her attempts to check its career, has rejoined—

> But wherefore could not I pronounce amen?
> I had most need of blessing, and amen
> Stuck in my throat,—

his selfish distress is still mistaken by her for remorse, and felt so keenly, as to make her exclaim—

> These deeds must not be thought
> After these ways; so, *it will make us mad!*

We shall find occasion, after a while, to revert to this remarkable presentiment of hers.

Meanwhile, through all the rest of this scene, Macbeth remains lost in his profitless rumination, leaving the business but half executed, on the completion of which depends, not only the attainment of the object of his ambition, but even his escape from detection as the murderer. On the other hand, her consciousness of the imminent peril which hangs over them both, recals Lady Macbeth from that momentary access of compunction to all her self-possession. Finding her husband still "lost so poorly in his thoughts," quite beyond recovery, she snatches the daggers from his hands, with the famous exclamation, "Infirm of purpose!" And here, let us observe, is the point, above all others in this wonderful scene, which most strikingly illustrates the twofold contrast subsisting between these two characters. Macbeth, having no true remorse, shrinks not at the last moment from perpetrating the murder, though his nervous agitation will not let him contemplate for an instant the aspect of the murdered. Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, having real remorse, does recoil at the last moment from the very act to which she had been using such violent and continued efforts to work herself up; but, being totally free from her husband's irritability of fancy, can, *now that his very preservation demands it,* go deliberately to look upon the sanguinary work which her own hand had shrunk from performing.

The following scene shews us Macbeth when his paroxysm ensuing upon the act of murder has quite spent itself, and he is become quite himself again—that is, the cold-blooded, cowardly, and treacherous assassin. Let any one who may have been disposed, with most of the critics, to believe that Shakespeare has delineated Macbeth as a character originally remorseful, well consider that speech of most elaborate, refined, and cold-blooded hypocrisy in which, so speedily after his poetical whinings over his own *mis-*

fortune in murdering Duncan, he alleges his motives for killing the two sleeping attendants:—

> *Macbeth.* Oh, yet I do repent me of my fury,
> That I did kill them.
> *Macduff.* Wherefore did you so?
> *Macb.* Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious,
> Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:
> The expedition of my violent love
> Outran the pauser, reason. . . . . .

Assuredly, too, the dramatist had his reasons for causing Macbeth's hypocritically pathetic description of the scene of murder to be delivered thus publicly in the presence of her whose hands have had so large a share in giving it that particular aspect. It lends double force to this most characteristic trait of Macbeth's deportment, that he should not be moved even by his lady's presence from delivering his affectedly indignant description of that bloody spectacle, in terms which must so vividly recal to her mind's eye the sickening objects which his own moral cowardice had compelled her to gaze upon:—

> Here lay Duncan,
> His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood;
> And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature,
> For ruin's wasteful entrance!

And then, how marvellously the next sentence is contrived, so as to express, in one breath, the aspect of the guiltless attendants whom his wife's guilty hands had besmeared, and that which he and she, the real murderers now standing before us, had presented the moment after their consummation of the deed:—

> There, *the murderers,*
> *Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers*
> *Unmannerly breech'd with gore.* Who could refrain,
> That had a heart to love, and in that heart
> Courage to make his love known?

These words draw from Lady Macbeth the instant exclamation, "Help me hence, oh!" And shortly after, she is carried out, still in a fainting state. The prevalent notion respecting this passage, grounded on the constantly false view of the lady's character, is,

that her swooning on this occasion is merely a feigned display of horror at the discovery of their sovereign's being murdered in their own house, and at the vivid picture of the sanguinary scene drawn by her husband. We believe, however, that our previous examination of her character must already have prepared the reader to give to this circumstance quite a different interpretation. He will bear in mind the burst of anguish which had been forced from her by Macbeth's very first ruminations upon his act:—

> These deeds must not be thought
> After these ways; *so, it will make us mad!*

Remembering this, he will see what a dreadful accumulation of suffering is inflicted on her by her husband's own lips in the speech we have just cited, painting in stronger, blacker colours than ever, the guilty horror of their common deed. Even her indomitable resolution may well sink for the moment under a stroke so withering, for which, being totally unexpected, she came so utterly unprepared. It is remarkable that, upon her exclamation of distress, Macduff, and shortly after, Banquo, cries out, "Look to the lady;" but that we find not the smallest sign of attention paid to her situation by Macbeth himself, who, arguing from his own character to hers, might regard it merely as a dexterous feigning on her part.

A character like this, we cannot too often repeat, is one of the most cowardly selfishness and most remorseless treachery, which all its poetical excitability does but exasperate into the perpetration of more and more extravagant enormities.

How finely is the progressive developement of such a character set before us in the course of the following act, in all that relates to the assassination of Banquo: and here, again, do we find the contrast between the moral natures of the husband and the wife brought out more completely than ever. The mind of Lady Macbeth, ever free from vague apprehensions of remote and contingent danger, seems oppressed only

by the weight of conscious guilt; and fearful is the expression of that slow and cureless gnawing of the heart, which we find in her reflection, at the opening of the second scene, upon the state of her feelings under her newly-acquired royal dignity:—

> Nought's had, all's spent,
> Where our desire is got without content:
> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
> Than, by destruction, dwell in doubtful joy!

Here is truly the groaning of "a mind diseased"—the corroding of "a rooted sorrow."

Her very next words, addressed to her royal husband, whose presence she has requested apparently for this purpose, exhibit at once the continued mistake under which she supposes the gloom and abstraction which she observes in Macbeth to proceed from the like remorse, and the magnanimity with which, hiding her own suffering, she applies herself to solace his:—

> How now, my lord? why do you keep alone,
> Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
> Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
> With them they think on? Things without remedy
> Should be without regard: what's done, is done.

Here is still the language of a heart fully occupied with the weight of guilt already incurred, and by no means contemplating a deliberate addition to its amount. But, alas! Macbeth's repentance of the crime committed has long been expended; his restless apprehensiveness is wholly occupied with the nearest danger that, he thinks, now threatens him; and to his exaggerating fancy the nearest danger ever seems close at hand. Most distinctly is this placed before us in his own soliloquy after parting with Banquo in the preceding scene:—

> To be thus, is nothing;
> But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo
> Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
> Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;
> And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
> He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
> To act in safety. There is none but he

Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
My genius is rebuk'd; as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Cæsar.

So much for the moral cowardice which cannot resign itself to await some more definite cause of apprehension from a man than what is to be found in his habitual qualities, and in qualities, too, which are noble in themselves. Now, mark the intense selfishness implied in the following reflections:—

He chid the sisters
When first they put the name of king upon me,
And bade them speak to him; then, prophet-like,
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If it be so,
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!—
Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,
And champion me to the utterance!

What a depth, we say, of the blackest selfishness is here disclosed! It is not enough for Macbeth, to have realised so speedily all the greatness the weird sisters had promised him, by virtue, he supposes, of preternatural knowledge,—unless he can defeat the prediction which, by virtue of the very same knowledge, they have made in favour of the race of Banquo after Macbeth's own time. His desire to prevent even this remote participation of Banquo's issue in the greatness for which he thinks himself partly indebted to this "metaphysical aid," is so infatuatedly headstrong as to make him absolutely, as he says, enter the lists against fate.

And now we behold all the difference between the irresolution of this man in prosecuting an act from which his nervous apprehensions operated to deter him, and the unshrinking, unrelenting procedure of

the same character in pursuit of a murderous purpose to which his fears impel him. Sure enough now of his own resolution, Macbeth feels no need of his wife's encouragement to keep him to his object of assassinating Banquo: he does not even lose time in communicating it to her, before he gives his instructions to the murderers; wherein, let us observe, the cool, ingenious falsehood with which he excites the personal rancour of these desperadoes against his intended victim, exhibits the inherent blackness of this character no less forcibly than it is shown in the speech above-quoted, describing his murder of Duncan's chamberlains.

So far, then, from being in that compunctious frame of mind which his wife supposes when addressing to him the words of expostulation already cited, he is in the diametrically opposite mood, eagerly anticipating the execution of his second treacherous murder, instead of being contrite for the former. Her imputation of remorse, therefore, he finds exceedingly importunate; and answers it in terms not at all corresponding, but intended, on the contrary, to prepare her for the disclosure of his present design against Banquo:—

> We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it;
> She'll close, and be herself; whilst our poor malice
> Remains in danger of her former tooth.

Here is not a syllable of remorse, but the earnest expression of conscious insecurity in his present position. The drift of his discourse, however, is not yet apparent. He proceeds:—

> But let
> The frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly!

By dreams, indeed, they both are shaken; but Lady Macbeth's, as the dramatist most fully shews us afterwards, are exclusively dreams of remorse for the past;

Macbeth's, of apprehension for the future. He continues:—

> Better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstacy. Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well;
> Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
> Can touch him further!

The lady's answer—

> Come on,
> Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
> Be bright and jovial 'mong your guests to night,—

shews us that she still has not the smallest glimpse of the real tendency of what he is saying to her, but supposes "the torture of the mind" which he feels, is that same "compunctious visiting" which has made her exclaim to her own solitary heart—

> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
> Than, by destruction, dwell in doubtful joy!

Macbeth returns to the charge: he seizes on her last words,

> Be bright and jovial 'mong your guests to-night,

in order to turn their conversation upon Banquo:—

> So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you:
> Let your rememberance apply to Banquo;
> Present him eminence both with eye and tongue.

Having thus fixed her attention upon the primary importance to their safety, of Banquo's dispositions toward them, he now ventures the first step in the disclosure of his fears:—

> Unsafe the while that we
> Must lave our honours in these flattering streams;
> And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
> Disguising what they are!

Still his lady takes not the smallest hint of his purpose, but refers all his uneasiness to regret for what is already committed, simply rejoining, "you must leave

this." Macbeth, according to his nature, irritated at finding her so inaccessible to his meaning, can no longer control himself, but exclaims at once—

> Oh, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
> Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives!

She simply answers,

> But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

This line has been interpreted by some critics as a deliberate suggesting, on Lady Macbeth's part, of the murder of Banquo and his son. This, however, we believe, will not appear to any one who shall have gone through the whole context as we have now laid it before the reader. The natural and unstrained meaning of the words is, at most, nothing more than this, that Banquo and his son are not immortal. It is not she, but her husband, that draws the practical inference from this harmless proposition—

> *There's* comfort yet; *they are assailable.*

That "they are assailable" may be "comfort," indeed, to him; but it is evidently none to her, notwithstanding that he proceeds:—

> Then, be thou jocund. Ere the bat hath flown
> His cloister'd flight,—ere, to black Hecate's summons,
> The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
> Hath rung night's yawning peal,—there shall be done
> A deed of dreadful note!

Still provokingly unapprehensive of his meaning, she asks him anxiously, "What's to be done?" But he, after trying the ground so far, finding her utterly indisposed to concur in his present scheme, *does not dare* to communicate it to her in plain terms, lest she should chide the fears that prompt him to this new and gratuitous enormity, by virtue of the very same spirit that had made her combat those which had withheld him from the one great crime which she had deemed necessary to his elevation. Thus, at least, by all that has preceded, are we led to interpret Macbeth's rejoinder—

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed.

It is only through a misapprehension, which unjustly lowers the generosity of her character, and unduly exalts that of her husband, that so many critics have represented this passage as spoken by Macbeth out of a magnanimous desire to spare his wife all guilty participation in an act which at the same time, they tell us, he believes will give her satisfaction. It is, in fact, but a new and signal instance of his moral cowardice. That, after his poetical invocation, "Come, seeling night," &c., she still sees not at all into his purpose, is evident from what he says at the end, "Thou marvell'st at my words," &c. And it is remarkable that, to the grand maxim with which he closes their dialogue,

Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill,

she answers not a word.

We come now to the great banquet scene, which presents to us Macbeth's abstracted frenzy at its culminating point. This we must examine in elaborate detail, since it involves the consideration of one of the grossest brutalities that still disfigure the acting of Shakespeare on his native stage.

In order to understand clearly the nature and meaning of the apparition of Banquo to the eyes of his murderer, we should revert to that very distinct indication of the most marked peculiarity of all in Macbeth's character which is given us from his own mouth in the scene where he first encounters the weird sisters. Here we are first made acquainted with that morbidly and uncontrollably excitable imagination in him, the workings of which amount to absolute hallucination of the senses:—

Why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:

> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man, that *function*
> *Is smother'd in surmise; and nothing is,*
> *But what is not.*
> *Banquo.* Look, how our partner's rapt.

"Nothing is, but what is not;" that is, the images presented to him by his excited imagination are so vivid as to banish from him all consciousness of the present scene—"function is smothered in surmise." The "horrid image," even in that vague and remote prospect, has such reality for him as to make his heart palpitate and his hair bristle on his head. No wonder, then, that when on the very point of realising the murder hitherto but fancied, his vision should be beguiled by images yet more vivid and moving. He not only *sees* the air-drawn dagger which he tries to clutch—he *sees* the spots of blood make their appearance on it while he is gazing. But he immediately recognizes the illusion:—

> There's no such thing:
> It is the bloody business which informs
> Thus to mine eyes.

He becomes clearly conscious that this apparition is neither more nor less than

> A dagger of the mind; *a false creation,*
> *Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.*

Nor are we aware that any manager has ever yet bethought himself of having an actual dagger suspended from the ceiling before the eyes of Macbeth's representative, by way of making this scene more intelligible to his audience.

So far, however, we have only had to consider Macbeth's horrors in anticipation of his first great crime. We come now to those immediately following the deed; and here we find the disturbance of his senses to be equally great, and their hallucination equally decided—only, this time, it is his ears instead of his eyes that "are made the fools of the other senses:"—

Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more!*

. . . . . .

Lady M. What do you mean?
Macb. Still it cried, *Sleep no more!* to all the house;

. . . . . .

Lady M. Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength, to think
So brainsickly of things.

When we consider how literally this fancied prediction of sleeplessness is fulfilled, as we hear from Lady Macbeth's own lips—"You lack the season of all natures, sleep,"—while the stimulus to "the heat-oppressed brain" goes on so fearfully accumulating,—is it wonderful that the very peculiar combination of circumstances under which, at his royal banquet, he proposes the health of his second victim, should irresistibly force upon his vision another "false creation"—a Banquo "of the mind?" It would be absolutely inconsistent with all we have known of him before, that this should not be the case. He takes his seat at table in a state of the most anxiously excited, momentary expectation of receiving the news of that second assassination, which is to deliver him from "the affliction of those terrible dreams that shake him nightly"—to "cancel and tear to pieces that great bond which keeps him pale." The news is brought him, and immediately his horrors of the other class, those of retrospection upon his own treacherous and sanguinary deed, assail him with redoubled force. However, with his usual over-eagerness to obviate suspicion, he ventures upon one of his speeches of double-refined hypocritical profession:—

Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,
Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present,
Whom may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance!

Here the speaker miscalculates his powers of self-command. The very violence which the framing of this piece of falsehood compels him to do to his imagination, makes the image of the horrid fact rush the more irresistibly upon his "heat-oppressed brain."

It could hardly be otherwise than that the effort to say, "Were the graced person of our Banquo present," &c., must force upon *his very eyes* the aspect of his victim's person as he now vividly conceives it from the murderer's description, with severed throat, and "twenty trenched gashes on his head." The complete hallucination by which Macbeth takes his own "false creation" for a real, objective figure, apparent to all eyes, is but a repetition, under more aggravated excitement than ever, of what, we have seen, had taken place in him several times before, in the previous course of the drama. In like manner, the second apparition in the course of the banquet, is produced to Macbeth's vision by a second violent effort of his tongue to contradict his feelings and the fact, with yet more subtle falsehood than before:—

> I drink to the general joy of the whole table,
> And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;
> Would he were here!

Again, we see, by his own descriptive words, that the apparition is no *ghost* at all—nothing but Macbeth's morbidly vivid consciousness of the actual aspect of Banquo's *corpse*, as contrasted with the living Banquo whose presence he affects to desire:—

> Thy *bones* are *marrowless*, thy *blood* is *cold;*
> Thou hast *no speculation* in *those eyes*
> Which thou dost glare with!

How this public exhibition of his uncontrollable frenzy operates upon the state of Macbeth's fortunes, is admirably indicated in one of his own characteristic ruminations, at the end of his first paroxysm:—

> Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time,
> Ere human statute purg'd the gentle weal;
> Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd,
> Too terrible for the ear: the times have been
> That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end: but now they rise again,
> With *twenty mortal murders on their crowns,*
> And push us from our stools. This is more strange
> Than such a murder is!

Herein we see expressed, at once, Macbeth's character and his destiny. Murderers before him had been able to keep their own counsel; but his feverish imagination does in effect raise his victim from under ground to push him from his stool, by letting the murder out through his own abstracted ravings. His lady has only just time to hurry out their guests, before he utters that concluding exclamation which does all but explicitly confess the fact of Banquo's assassination:—

> It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood:
> Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;
> Augurs, and understood relations, have,
> By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth
> The secret'st man of blood.

This second paroxysm over, his very consciousness that his loss of self-possession has betrayed him into awakening general suspicion, excites his apprehensions of danger from others to the utmost pitch of exaggeration. He had said of Banquo, before giving orders for his murder, "There is none but he, whose being I do fear." But now, he not only speaks of Macduff as the next great object of his distrust—

> How sayst thou—that Macduff denies his person
> At our great bidding?—

but he has begun to suspect everybody:—

> There's not a one of them, but in his house
> I keep a servant feed.

Now, since Macbeth's grand maxim of security is, to destroy everybody whom he does suspect, he no longer limits his views to individual assassinations, but is launched at once upon an ocean of sanguinary atrocity:—

> *For mine own good,*
> *All causes shall give way;* I am in blood
> Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er:
> Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;
> Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

The savage slaughter of Macduff's family in revenge for his own escape, is but the first of these "strange things," the series of which is expressed in those words of Macduff to Malcolm:—

> Each new morn,
> New widows howl; new orphans cry; new sorrows
> Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
> As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out
> Like syllable of dolour;—

and more particularly in those of Rosse to Macduff:—

> Alas, poor country;
> Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot
> Be call'd our mother, but our grave: where nothing,
> But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
> Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rend the air,
> Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
> A modern ecstacy; the dead man's knell
> Is there scarce ask'd for whom; and good men's lives
> Expire before the flowers in their caps,
> Dying or ere they sicken!
> *Macduff.* Oh, relation
> Too nice, and yet too true!

And now comes the realisation of Macbeth's own presentiment expressed in the soliloquy preceding his final resolution to perpetrate the murder of Duncan:—

> But, in these cases,
> We still have judgment here; that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips.

The fulfilment, in his own case, is thus described in the words of one of his revolted thanes:—

> *Angus.* Now does he feel
> His secret murders sticking on his hands:
> Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;
> Those he commands, move only in command,
> Nothing in love: now does he feel his title
> Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
> Upon a dwarfish thief;—

while from abroad—

> The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,
> His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff:

Revenges burn in them; for their dear causes
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm
Excite the mortified man!

Finding himself almost bereft of human support in his usurped dominion, Macbeth, in his purely selfish clinging to self-preservation, is now thrown, for exclusive reliance, upon his "metaphysical aid" implied in the predictions of 'the weird sisters.' Here, therefore, it becomes necessary to consider the nature and operation of that preternatural agency, the use of which by the poet stamps this drama with so peculiar a character.

3.—MACBETH AND THE WEIRD SISTERS.

In a merely picturesque and poetical view, the weird sisters, with their anonymous personality, their nameless deeds, and their equivocal oracles,—with their aspect wild, and withered, and lightning-seared, as just descended from the thunder-cloud,—form, as it were, a harmonizing link between the moral blackness of the principal subject and the tempestuous heaven that lours over it. But far more important as well as interesting it is, to trace the great moral purpose designed and effected by the dramatist, in developing by this means, more fully and strikingly than could have been done by merely human machinery, the evil tendencies inherent in the individual nature of his hero.

The first indications that are given us of the character of these mysterious beings, in the *living and speaking* drama, which is what we must constantly endeavour to keep before our mind's eye in studying the works of Shakespeare, we find in the external figure under which they present themselves to the

spectator, amid thunder and lightning, at the opening of the piece. This figure, in all its essentials, is indicated by the words of Banquo on first beholding them:—

> What are these,
> So wither'd, and so wild in their attire;
> That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
> And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
> That man may question?—You seem to understand me,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so.

We see at once that these are no human beings at all—no *witches* in the proper sense of the term—but spirits of darkness clothed under an anomalously human appearance.

The aspect corresponding to these indications, prepares us, at the rising of the curtain, for the first utterance of their grotesque and mysterious language—

> When shall we three meet again
> In thunder, lightning, or in rain?—

wherein their essentially mischievous nature is denoted by their inseparable association with material storm. The next words—

> When the hurly-burly's done,
> When the battle's lost and won—

begin to unfold to us the interest which these beings take in human discord and disaster.

> Where the place? Upon the heath.
> There to meet with Macbeth.

Here we have the first intimation of that spirit of wickedness existing in Macbeth which developes itself in the progress of the piece. From this first moment, the reader or auditor should be strictly on his guard against the ordinary critical error of regarding these beings as the originators of Macbeth's criminal purpose. Macbeth attracts their attention and excites their interest, through the sympathy which evil ever

has with evil—because he already harbours a wicked design — because mischief is germinating in his breast, which their influence is capable of fomenting. It is most important, in order to judge aright of Shakespeare's metaphysical, moral, and religious meaning in this great composition, that we should not mistake him as having represented that spirits of darkness are here permitted absolutely and gratuitously to seduce his hero from a state of perfectly innocent intention. It is plain that such an error at the outset vitiates and debases the moral to be drawn from the whole piece. Macbeth does not project the murder of Duncan because of his encounter with the weird sisters; the weird sisters encounter him because he has projected the murder—because they know him better than his royal master does, who tells us, "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face." But these ministers of evil are privileged to see "the mind's construction" where human eye cannot penetrate—in the mind itself. They repair to the blasted heath because, as one of them says afterwards of Macbeth, "something wicked this way comes."

In the next two lines—

> I come, Graymalkin!——
> Paddock calls. Anon!—

we perceive the connection of these beings with the world invisible and inaudible to mortal senses. It is only through these mysterious answers of theirs that we know anything of the other beings whom they name thus grotesquely, sufficiently indicating spirits of deformity akin to themselves, and like themselves rejoicing in that elemental disturbance into which they mingle as they vanish from our view:—

> Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
> Hover through the fog and filthy air.

The more, let us observe, that the wild, uncouth rhymings of Shakespeare's weird sisters are examined, the more deeply significant will they be found—the more consistently expressive of that peculiar indivi-

duality which their creator has given them among the world of evil spirits. Not a word of merely random incoherence or unintelligibility, as would have been the case with any inferior artist. Thus, after the scene between king Duncan and the messengers from the field of battle, which acquaints us with Macbeth's position at the outset of the drama as a victorious warrior, suppressing a rebellion and repelling an invasion, the 'sisters,' met at the appointed place upon the blasted heath, are allowed, before Macbeth's arrival, to disclose more particularly the character of their spiritual deformity, especially the one whose chief delight seems to be in sea-storm and shipwreck:—

A sailor's wife had chesnuts in her lap, &c.

It is in the evening of the same stormy day on which they make their first appearance, that they meet the fellow-captains, Macbeth and Banquo, returning from their victory. We are strikingly reminded of this by the first words of Macbeth to his companion as they enter—

So foul and fair a day I have not seen;

that is, fair in the success of their arms, and foul in its tempestuous weather. It is important to observe, that the expressions of enquiring surprise which escape from the chieftains on first beholding these apparitions, sufficiently shew that Shakespeare conceived them as quite independent of anything which the superstition of the time in which the story is laid may be supposed to have imagined: they are as new and strange to the *fancy* as they are to the *eyes* of their beholders. It is instructive, also, to mark the first indications given us of the strong difference of character between Banquo and Macbeth, by the very different tone in which they address these novel personages. Banquo uses the language of cool and modest enquiry:—

Live you? or are you aught
That man may question, &c.

But Macbeth betrays at the very first his habit of

selfish, headstrong wilfulness, and overbearing command:—

> Speak, if you can. What are you?

Banquo continues in the same reasonable and moderate strain towards beings whom he feels to be exempt from his control:—

> I' the name of truth,
> Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
> Which outwardly ye shew?

It is not until they have already spoken to Macbeth, that he requests them to speak to himself:—

> My noble partner
> You greet with present grace, and great prediction
> Of noble having, and of royal hope,
> That he seems rapt withal; to me you speak not.
> If you can look into the seeds of time,
> And say which grain will grow, and which will not,
> Speak, then, to me, who neither beg nor fear
> Your favours nor your hate.

But Macbeth persists in *commanding* them to speak:—

> Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more.
> . . . . . Say, from whence
> You owe this strange intelligence? or why
> Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
> With such prophetic greeting? Speak, *I charge you.*

Yet, when first addressed by Banquo, they had given a distinct sign that they were not accessible to human questioning:—

> Live you? or are you aught
> That man may question?—You seem to understand me,
> *By each at once her choppy finger laying*
> *Upon her skinny lips.*

They return, indeed, no word of answer to either of their human interlocutors; their enigmatical announcements are clearly premeditated and purely gratuitous. Let us now mark the way in which these are respectively received by Macbeth and by his comrade. Banquo, indifferent to their speeches, neither hoping nor fearing anything from them, simply exclaims, in doubt whether his senses have not deceived him:—

> The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
> And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?——
> Were such things here, as we do speak about?
> Or have we eaten of the insane root,
> That takes the reason prisoner?

But from the moment that their words point to the object upon which Macbeth's ambitious, cupidity is already remorselessly bent, his coolness of judgment abandons him; he is no longer in a condition to speculate on the nature or the trustworthiness of these strange informants; but, as in every such case of absorbing, headlong desire, believes everybody and everything that foretels to him the attainment of what he so violently covets. At first, as Banquo tells us, "he seems rapt withal." Then, he proceeds to demand more particular information from them, as if their testimony were of indubitable veracity. No matter that he sees them vanish at last "as breath into the wind;" still he says, "Would they had staid!" and to the incredulous Banquo, "Your children shall be kings," as if to draw from him the flattering rejoinder, "*You* shall be king," which he earnestly follows up with saying—

> And thane of Cawdor, too—went it not so?

It is not surprising, then, that after the startling announcement of his being actually created thane of Cawdor, he should regard the weird sisters as undoubted prophetesses of truth, and their "shalt be king hereafter," as an encouragement to his guilty purpose by truly predicting its success:—

> Glamis, and thane of Cawdor:
> The greatest is behind. . . . . .
> Do you not hope your children shall be kings,
> When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me
> Promis'd no less to them? . . . . .
> . . . . . Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme!

The same undoubting faith in these strange predicters appears in his letter to his wife:—

They met me in the day of success; and I have learned by the perfectest report *they have more in them than mortal knowledge.* . . This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness; that thou mightest not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of *what greatness is promised thee.*

Lady Macbeth's eagerness for the attainment of their common object being, as we have remarked already, yet more violent and passionate than her husband's, she is even less at leisure than he to deliberate as to the trustworthiness of such promises. She promptly echoes his expressions of belief:—

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promis'd.

Again:—

The golden round
Which *fate and metaphysical aid doth seem*
To have thee crown'd withal.

And once more, on first beholding Macbeth after this announcement:—

Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!

We have noticed already that fine illustration which the poet gives us of the operation of intense selfishness, incapable of veneration as of sympathy, in Macbeth's abortive endeavour to defeat that part of the preternatural prediction which relates to Banquo's posterity. Equally characteristic is the eagerness wherewith, after the grand banquet scene—which has left him, as he knows, an object of universal suspicion, who consequently suspects every one, and distrusts all human support—he repairs to consult those mysterious informants whose oracles he has just been attempting to belie:—

I will to-morrow
(Betimes I will) unto the weird sisters:
More *shall* they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst: *for mine own good,*
All causes shall give way.

Well may their mistress, Hecate, say of him to the sisters:—

All you have done
Hath been but for a wayward son,
Spiteful and *wrathful;* who, as others do,
Loves *for his own ends,* not for you.

Truly, Macbeth in his extremity shews little reverence for those whom he seems now to regard as his only protectors:—

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is't you do?——
I conjure you, by that which you profess
(Howe'er you come to know it), answer me:
Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches; though the yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up;
Though bladed corn be lodg'd, and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
Though palaces, and pyramids, do slope
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
Of nature's germins tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken;—answer me
To what I ask you!

This, surely, is the very sublimity of passionate and overbearing self-will. But Macbeth is now to be punished for his late attempt to cheat his infernal benefactors, as he supposes them to be. Says Hecate to her subordinates:—

But make amends now: get you gone,
And at the pit of Acheron
Meet me i' the morning; thither he
Will come to know his destiny.
Your vessels, and your spells, provide,
Your charms, and everything beside:
I'm for the air; this night I'll spend
Unto a dismal-fatal end.
Great business must be wrought ere noon:
Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound;
I'll catch it ere it come to ground;
And that, distill'd by magic sleights,
Shall raise such artificial sprights
As, by the strength of their illusion,
Shall draw him on to his confusion.

Let us observe, in corroboration of the view for which we have already contended—that the weird

sisters are not represented by Shakespeare as the original tempters of Macbeth,—that Hecate here charges them, not as having presumed without her concurrence *to lead him into temptation*, but as having simply *taken part in his wicked intentions*:—

> How did you dare
> To *trade and traffic with Macbeth*
> *In riddles and affairs of death;*
> And I, the mistress of your charms,
> The close contriver of all harms,
> Was never call'd to bear my part,
> And shew the glory of our art?

In their first encounter with the murderer in intention, it will be remembered that the weird sisters refuse all answer to the enquiries of himself and his companion; but now that, under their mistress's command, they are to go beyond mere equivocation, and administer direct instigation, they vouchsafe reply to his questions:—

> Speak.—Demand.—We'll answer.—
> Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,
> Or from our masters'?

To which Macbeth replies, in his usual imperious fashion:—

> Call them, let me see them.

And when the apparition of the armed head rises, he goes on in the same strain of presumptuous command, as if everything in heaven, earth, or hell, were bound to yield to his selfish will—

> Tell me, thou unknown power,——

but is checked by one of the sisters—

> He knows thy thought;
> Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

He knows thy thought. Herein, again, we see distinctly indicated the spirit of the interference which these evil agents are permitted to exercise. They do but flatter Macbeth in the thoughts he has already conceived—they do but urge him along the course upon which he has spontaneously entered:—

> Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! *beware Macduff—*
> *Beware the thane of Fife.*—Dismiss me.—Enough.

Macbeth, however, is not to be so easily silenced:—

> Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution thanks;
> Thou hast harp'd my fear aright. *But one word more.*

Again he has to be told,—

> He will not be commanded. Here's another,
> More potent than the first.

The first words of counsel delivered by this apparition of the bleeding child—"Be bloody, bold, and resolute"—do but "harp" the eager predetermination of Macbeth, as the former apparition had "harped his fear." But now comes the really equivocal though seemingly plain assurance—

> Laugh to scorn the power of man,
> For *none of woman born shall harm Macbeth.*

He goes on with his interminable questioning:—

> What is this,
> That rises like the issue of a king,
> And wears upon his baby brow the round
> And top of sovereignty?

This time, to silence him, if possible, more effectually, the sisters all join in telling him—"Listen, but speak not." He has already, we see, received the assurance of *invulnerability* from personal attack: he now receives that of *invincibility* against conspiracy and invasion:—

> Be lion-mettled, proud; and take no care
> Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:
> Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
> Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
> Shall come against him.
> *Macb.* That will never be, &c.

Not satisfied, however, with these full assurances, as he considers them, of security to his life and to his rule, he continues:—

> Yet my heart
> Throbs to know one thing. Tell me (if your art
> Can tell so much), shall Banquo's issue *ever*
> Reign in this kingdom?

And the admonition given him by the sisters, "Seek to know no more," only draws from him the ungrateful exclamation:—

> I *will* be satisfied. Deny me this,
> And *an eternal curse fall on you!*

Yet, when his demand is granted, and the shadowy procession of Banquo's royal descendants begins to pass before him, he cries out—

> Filthy hags!
> *Why do you shew me this?*

and concludes with those words of selfish disappointment, "What, is this so?" It is the more necessary that we should cite the answer which one of the sisters makes to this query, because it is, now-a-days, unaccountably omitted on the stage, to the great damage of this scene, since it is not only remarkable as the final communication made by these evil beings to their wicked consulter, but is the most pointedly characteristic of their diabolical nature. It is the exulting mockery with which the fiend pays off the presumptuous criminal who has so insolently dared him:—

> Ay, sir, all this is so. But why
> Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?—
> Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprights,
> And shew the best of our delights;
> I'll charm the air to give a sound,
> While you perform your antique round;
> That this great king may kindly say,
> Our duties did his welcome pay.

And so dancing they disappear.

> *Macbeth.* Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour
> Stand aye accursed in the calendar!—
> Come in, without there!
>
> Enter *Lenox.*
>
> *Len.* What's your grace's will?
> *Macb.* Saw you the weird sisters?
> *Len.* No, my lord.
> *Macb.* Came they not by you?
> *Len.* No, indeed, my lord.

Macb. Infected be the air whereon they ride,
And damn'd all those that trust them!

Yet he goes on trusting them, having lost all other reliance. Thus, finding his thanes all deserting him, he says:—

Bring me no more reports—let them fly all:
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know
All mortal consequents, pronounc'd me thus:—
"Fear not, Macbeth; *no man that's born of woman,*
Shall e'er have power on thee." Then fly, false thanes,
And mingle with the English epicures:
The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear,
Shall never sagg with doubt, nor shake with fear!

Nevertheless, doubt and fear beset him at the entrance of the very next messenger of ill news:—

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon! &c.

And when the approach of the English force is announced to him, forgetting his predicted safety, he says—

This push
Will cheer me ever, *or disseat me now;*—

and proceeds with the well-known anticipatory rumination:—

I have liv'd long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf:
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, but dares not.

Mere *poetical whining*, again, over his own most merited situation. Yet Hazlitt, amongst others, talks of him as "calling back all our sympathy" by this reflection. Sympathy, indeed! for the exquisitely refined selfishness of this most odious personage! This passage is exactly of a piece with that preceding one already quoted, in which he envies the fate of his royal victim, and seems to think himself

hardly used, that Duncan, after all, should be better off than himself. Such exclamations, from such a character, are but an additional title to our detestation: the man who sets at nought all human ties, should at least be prepared to abide in quiet the inevitable consequences. But the moral cowardice of Macbeth, we see, is consummate. He cannot resign himself to his fate. The more seemingly desperate his situation becomes, the more he clings to his sole remaining source of encouragement, shadowy as it is—

> I will not be afraid of death and bane,
> Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

And when Birnam forest is actually come to Dunsinane, still he only "begins"

> To doubt the equivocation of the fiend,
> That lies like truth.

Still he finds one reliance left, in that straw which, to his selfish, cowardly fears, looks like a staff of security:—

> What's he
> *That was not born of woman?* Such a one
> Am I to fear, or none.

Nothing, again, can be more characteristic than the exclamation when his castle is surrounded, and nothing is left him but his individual life:—

> Why should I play the Roman fool, and die
> On mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the gashes
> Do better upon them.

No, indeed! Macbeth is no Brutus! For a man to encounter the sword of his enemy, requires only physical courage; but to die upon his own, demands high moral resolution. And when Macduff appears before him, it is not compunction that draws from him the confession—

> Of all men else I have avoided thee:
> But get thee back—my soul is too much charg'd
> With blood of thine already.

It is, that the words of the preternatural monitor are still ringing in his ear — "Beware Macduff — beware the thane of Fife." Compelled to fight, he avails himself of the first pause, while he is yet unwounded, to persuade his antagonist of his invulnerability:—

> Thou losest labour;
> . . . . . .
> I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
> To one of woman born.

When Macduff has acquainted him with the peculiarity of his own birth, there is no want of physical courage, we must observe, implied in Macbeth's declining the combat. He may well believe that now, more than ever, it is time to "beware Macduff." He is at length convinced that "fate and metaphysical aid" are against him; and, consistent to the last in his hardened and whining selfishness, no thought of the intense blackness of his own perfidy interferes to prevent him from complaining of falsehood in those evil beings from whose very nature he should have expected nothing else:—

> And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope!

There is no cowardice, we say, in his declining the combat under such a conviction. Neither is there any courage in his renewing it; for there is no room for courage in opposing evident fate. But the last word and action of Macbeth are an expression of the *moral* cowardice which we trace so conspicuously throughout his career; he surrenders his life that he may not "be baited with the rabble's curse." So dies Macbeth, shrinking from deserved opprobrium; but he dies, as he has lived, *remorseless.*

It is now time to follow out the developement of the very different character of his lady, as shown in the very different end to which she is brought by purely mental suffering.

4.—LADY MACBETH IN HER DESPAIR.

We have seen the passionate desire of Lady Macbeth for her husband's exaltation overbearing, though not stifling, her "compunctious visitings," until she finds "the golden round" actually encircling the brow of her equally ambitious but more selfish consort. We have seen the stings of conscience assailing her with fresh violence so soon as that sustained effort ceased which she had felt to be necessary for going "the nearest way" to her lord's elevation and her own. Again, however, we have seen them silenced for the time in the new effort which she finds imposed upon her, to soothe, as she supposes, those pangs of remorse in her husband's breast which are not only tormenting himself, but betraying his guilty consciousness to all the world. But the close of the great banquet scene, which we have already considered, presents a new phasis of her feelings. She finds that her expostulations, whether in the strain of tenderness or of reproof, are alike powerless to restrain the workings of his "heat-oppressed brain." From the moment that she finds it necessary to say to their guests—

> I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse;
> *Question enrages him;* at once, good night:
> Stand not upon the order of your going,
> But go at once;—

from that moment, we find her brief and quiet answers to his enquiries breathing nothing but the anxious desire to still his feverish agitation by what, she is now convinced, is the only available means—the most compliant gentleness. Her observation,

> You lack the season of all natures, sleep,

expresses her deep conviction that, if any treatment can cure or assuage his mental malady, it must be a

soothing one, and that alone. But his very reply to this gentle exhortation shews us that her power to allay his fears, and consequently to control his excesses, is utterly at an end:—

> My strange and *self*-abuse,
> Is the initiate fear, that *wants hard use:*
> *We are yet but young in deed.*

Up to this point, be it observed, she seems ignorant of Banquo's assassination; neither has her husband acquainted her distinctly with his designs against Macduff; henceforth he has no confidants whatever but his preternatural counsellors, who spend no more advice upon him than is just sufficient to confirm him in his infatuated course. It seems to be only from common rumour that his lady learns the destruction of Macduff's family, and the career of reckless violence which it opens on her husband's part, to the utter contempt of all human opinion, and sundering of all human attachment to his person or his rule. Their first great criminal act, the murder of Duncan, she had fondly thought should,

> to all our days and nights to come,
> Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Mistaking, as we have seen, her husband's character, she foresaw not at all that he would both hold and act upon the maxim that

> Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill,—

that is, he would perversely make his very safety consist in getting deeper into danger. But now she finds that the very deed which was to establish him for ever, has precipitated him into inevitable destruction; she feels that but for the incitement administered by her own unbending will, that deed would not have been committed; that consequently, that very pertinacity of hers, which she expected was to make the lasting greatness of the man in whose glory all her wishes in this life were absorbed, had sealed his black, irrevocable doom. Nor is this all: the horrible unde-

ception as to one part of his character, implies a yet more cruel one respecting another part. To find that all she had mistaken in Macbeth for "the milk of human kindness" was but mere selfish apprehensiveness, involves the conviction that he is capable of no true affection, no thorough confidence, even towards *her*. From the moment that he fails, as we have seen, to gain her concurrence in his design against Banquo, he shuts up his counsels utterly from her, and leaves her to brood in solitude over her unimparted anguish; depriving her even of that diversion and solace which her own wretched thoughts would still have found in the endeavour to soothe and tranquillize *his* agitations. With awful truth does Malcolm's observation to Macduff come home to the case of this despairing lady:—

> The grief that does not speak,
> *Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.*

Sustained by the prosperity of her husband, or even by his confidence and sympathy in adversity, her mental resolution might long have been proof against those latent stings of remorse which we have shown to be ineradicably planted in her heart. But bereft alike of worldly hope and of human sympathy, the consciousness of ineffaceable guilt re-awakens with scorpion fierceness in her bosom; and now we have the awful comment upon that expression of forced indifference which she had uttered to her husband—"A little water clears us of this deed"—in her sleep-walking exclamations:—"Yet here's a spot.——Out, damned spot! out, I say!——What! will these hands ne'er be clean?——Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.—Oh! oh! oh!"

Yes, *there* is the constant burden, the damned spot, the smell of the blood still—in the irrevocableness of the deed—*her* deed in effect, though not in conception—which has plunged them both into the deepest abyss of ruin. To that reflection her lonely heart is abandoned; to that it is chained, as on "a wheel of

fire!" But around this central and predominant impression, we find, in the course of her brief and incoherent revelations, confusedly transposed, like reflections from some shattered convex mirror, the whole circle of circumstances conducing to, or consequent on, the great decisive act. There is her previous chiding of his nervous apprehensions,—"Fye, my lord, fye!—a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?" There is the horror of the murdering moment—"One, two! Why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky!" There is her equally horrid reminiscence of the sanguinary spectacle which her lord's pusillanimity had compelled her to look upon,—"Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him!" There is the effort to tranquillize her husband's first agitation after the murder,—"Wash your hands, put on your night-gown; look not so pale.——To bed, to bed; there's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. ——To bed, to bed, to bed." There is her effort to still his supposed remorse,—"What's done cannot be undone." There is her chiding of his agitated behaviour in public,—"No more o'that, my lord, no more o'that; you mar all with this starting."——"I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot come out of his grave." And finally, there is that burst of mere helpless commiseration,—"The thane of Fife had a wife—where is she now!" Here, we say, is rapidly traced the whole dreadful series of consequences, from her own unshrinking instigation of the secret murder, to Macbeth's open launching upon the sea of boundless atrocity which is to overwhelm him. But all is retrospective—all reduces itself to ruminating on the circumstances of the murder, and her subsequent endeavours to sustain and guide the spirit of her husband.

Macbeth, let us observe, is an habitual soliloquist; there was no need of any somnambulism, to disclose to us his inmost soul. But it would have been incon-

sistent with Lady Macbeth's powers and habits of self-control, that her guilty consciousness should have made its way so distinctly through her lips in her waking moments. Her sleep-walking scene, therefore, becomes a matter of physiological truth no less than of dramatic necessity. As the doctor himself here tells us:—

> Unnatural deeds
> Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
> To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.

He reads despair in the language of this "slumbry agitation:"—

> More needs she the divine than the physician.
> . . . . . Look after her;
> Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
> And still keep eyes upon her.

Again, in answer to Macbeth's enquiry, "How does your patient, doctor?"—

> Not so sick, my lord,
> As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,
> That keep her from her rest.

And, finally, that apprehension of the doctor's which had made him desire all instruments of violence to be removed out of her way, seems to be realised by Malcolm's concluding mention of her as one

> Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
> Took off her life.

On the other hand, nothing in Macbeth's demeanour is more strikingly characteristic than the manner in which he receives the intelligence of his lady's illness and her death. Nothing so thoroughly shews us that he had regarded her with no generous affection, but simply as a being exceedingly useful to him, whom, therefore, he could very ill afford to part with. The physician's intimation above-cited, as to her "thick-coming fancies," draws from him not the smallest sign of sympathy or commiseration. He desires her preservation, indeed, as an article of utility; and in his usual irrationally imperious style, he com-

mands the doctor to "cure her of that." Nothing but utter insensibility to her individual sufferings could permit him, at such a moment, to indulge in one of his selfish poetical abstractions:—

> Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd;
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain;
> And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?

In like manner, his rejoinder to the physician's assurance, "Therein the patient must minister to himself," is purely self-regarding:—

> Throw physic to the dogs—*I*'ll none of it.

And, in the same spirit, he continues:—

> Doctor, the thanes fly from me.
> . . . . If thou couldst, doctor, cast
> The water of my land, find *her* disease,
> And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
> I would applaud thee to the very echo,
> That should applaud again! . . . . .
> What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug,
> Would scour these English hence?

When the queen's women are heard lamenting within the castle, the same self-absorption of her husband seems to prevent him from at all divining the cause. He is occupied exclusively with ruminating upon his own sensations:—

> I have almost forgot the taste of fears:
> The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
> To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair
> Would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir
> As life were in't: I have supp'd full with horrors;
> Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
> Cannot once start me!——Wherefore was that cry?

When he is told, "The queen, my lord, is dead," his exclamation is one of anything but compassion—he seems to think she has used him very ill by dying just then:—

> She *should* have died hereafter—
> There *would* have been a time for such a word.

He requites her, however, by forgetting her utterly and finally in another of his grand self-regarding ruminations:—

> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing!

We might here have closed our present notice of this great Shakespearian tragedy, leaving this full examination into the developement of its two leading characters to make its unassisted impression upon the reader's mind. But the established *theatrical* treatment of the piece will by no means permit us to do so. Of all the great works of its author, this, we believe, is the one which, upon the whole, is most frequently exhibited on the stage; yet, of all others, it is the one which, by injurious omissions, by more injurious insertions, and by erroneous acting, is the most thoroughly falsified to the apprehension of the auditor. So that, although the view which we have presented of the mutual relation between those two characters, so different from the prevailing one, is drawn from the most severely attentive consideration of Shakespeare's text; yet we can scarcely anticipate a fair reception of it by the public at large, unless it be supported by a distinct exposure of the distortion and perversion which are still almost nightly inflicted upon this masterpiece of the greatest of dramatists, by that corrupted mode of representing it, which prescription would seem to have almost irrevocably sanctioned.

5.—STAGE CORRUPTIONS OF THIS PLAY, BY OMISSION OR INSERTION.

FIRST, as to omissions; in this, perhaps the most closely and rigidly coherent of all its author's compositions, and, consequently, that in which any curtailment most necessarily implies mutilation.

Passing over mere suppressions of detail, let us come to the comic scene of the porter, which immediately follows the murder scene between Macbeth and his lady, and respecting which we entirely dissent from the opinion so positively expressed by Coleridge,* that it was "written for the mob by some other hand." Coleridge himself, in the very next paragraph of these notes, alluding to a subsequent passage of this play, indicates the true spirit and bearing of this comic introduction. Shakespeare, he observes, never introduces the comic "but when it may react on the tragedy by harmonious contrast." Precisely so. The horror of this midnight assassination is thrown into the boldest possible relief by the fact of its being perpetrated under the mask of grateful, plenteous, jovial, and even riotous hospitality. As the murder scene receives its last heightening of effect from that wherein the guests are seen retiring to rest, and Banquo tells Macbeth—

> The king 's a-bed:
> He hath been in unusual pleasure, and
> Sent forth great largess to your offices:
> This diamond he greets your wife withal,
> By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up
> In measureless content;—

so, in this same disputed passage of the drunken porter, wherein we are presented, as it were, with the last heavy, expiring fumes of the nocturnal entertainment,—the touch of humorous colloquy between this drolly-moralizing domestic and the gentlemen who

* 'Literary Remains,' vol. ii. p. 246.

are up thus early to awaken the king for his intended journey, and are quite unsuspecting of mischief,—gives the more overpowering force to the burst of indignant horror produced by their discovery of the sanguinary fact.

The introduction of this comic passage having, for this reason, we believe, been deliberately determined on by the dramatist, what more natural than that it should be made to issue chiefly from the mouth of the half-sobered porter? It is a most essential part of the dramatic incident, that the criminal pair should be startled in the very moment of completing their sanguinary deed, by those loyal followers who are come to awaken the sovereign whom their host and hostess have put to sleep for ever. They must be admitted, and the porter, of course, must make his appearance,—the fittest representative, too, of the latest portion of the night's carousing, and the fittest, therefore, to give the dialogue a gravely comic turn. Another dramatic purpose, too, is served by the interposing of this interval in the chain of tragic circumstance—the allowing of time for Macbeth, after retiring from the scene, "lost," as his lady tells him, "so poorly in his thoughts," to wash his hands, put on his night-dress, and assume that perfect self-possession, in speech at least, wherewith he comes forth to meet the early risers, Macduff and Lenox. The omission of the whole passage in acting, except a very few words, by bringing Macbeth forward again, cool and collected, so immediately after he has withdrawn in such confusion, destroys, in this important place, the coherence and probability of the incident. Modern decorum, no doubt, demands the omission of the greater part of the porter's share in the dialogue; but there seems no such reason for suppressing the "devil-porter" soliloquy, wherein he "had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire," amongst whom he tells us of "an equivocator, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven."

The second theatrical mutilation that we have to notice, is the total omission of Lady Macbeth's appearance in the discovery scene. We hardly need point out the doubly gross improbability involved herein. On the one hand, the lady's clear understanding of the part it behoves her to act, and her perfect self-possession, must of themselves bring her forward, as the mistress of the mansion, to enquire—

> What's the business,
> That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
> The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak.

On the other hand, her solicitude to see how her nervous lord conducts himself under this new trial of his self-possession, so vital to them both, must force her upon the scene. Strange, therefore, does it seem, that we should miss her altogether, as we do in the present mode of performance, from this critical passage of the incident. How much deep illustration of character, too, as we have shown in a preceding page, is lost by this one brief suppression,—besides that it strikes out one complete link in the main dramatic interest.

A minor injury, but still injurious, is the omission, in the following scene, of the "old man," and of the dialogue which passes between him and Rosse outside the castle. It was plainly one deliberate aim of the great artist, to keep the association and affinity which he chose to establish between spiritual and material storm and darkness continually before us:—

> *Old Man.* Threescore and ten I can remember well;
> Within the volume of which time I have seen
> Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night
> Hath trifled former knowings.
> *Rosse.* Ah, good father,
> Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
> Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock 'tis day,
> And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:
> Is it night's predominance, or the day's shame,
> That darkness does the face of earth intomb,
> When living light should kiss it?
> *Old M.* 'Tis unnatural,
> Even like the deed that's done, &c.

The next suppression, again, really mutilates the chain of dramatic interest—depriving us, in the first place, of that expressive history which Lenox, in conversation with another lord, gives us of the progress of suspicion and disaffection among Macbeth's own adherents:—

> My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,
> Which can interpret further: only, I say,
> Things have been strangely borne. The gracious Duncan
> Was pitied of Macbeth.—Marry, he was dead.
> And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late;
> Whom, you may say, if it please you, Fleance kill'd,
> For Fleance fled.—Men must not walk too late.
> Who cannot want the thought, how monstrous
> It was for Malcolm, and for Donalbain,
> To kill their gracious father? damned fact!
> How it did grieve Macbeth! Did he not straight,
> In pious rage, the two delinquents tear,
> That were the slaves of drink, and thralls of sleep?
> Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;
> For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive,
> To hear the men deny it. So that, I say,
> He has borne all things well. And I do think
> That, had he Duncan's sons under his key
> (As, an't please heav'n, he shall not), they should find
> What 'twere to kill a father; so should Fleance.—
> But, peace!—for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd
> His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear,
> Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell
> Where he bestows himself?

The answer tells us the state of the rightful cause, of which Macduff is become the leader:—

> The son of Duncan,
> From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,
> Lives in the English court; and is receiv'd
> Of the most pious Edward with such grace,
> That the malevolence of fortune nothing
> Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff
> Is gone to pray the holy king, on his aid
> To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward;
> That, by the help of these (with Him above
> To ratify the work), we may again
> Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights;
> Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives;
> Do faithful homage, and receive free honours;

All which we pine for now. And this report
Hath so exasperate the king, that he
Prepares for some attempt of war.
Lenox. Sent he to Macduff?
Lord. He did: and with an absolute *Sir, not I,*
The cloudy messenger turns me his back,
And hums; as who should say, *You'll rue the time*
That clogs me with this answer.
Len. And that well might
Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance
His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel
Fly to the court of England, and unfold
His message ere he come; that a swift blessing
May soon return to this our suffering country
Under a hand accurs'd!
Lord. My prayers with him!

This passage, at present wholly omitted on the stage, is clearly necessary in order to make us understand the full import of Macbeth's cruel revenge upon Macduff's family. But we find a much more important omission—the most injurious of all—in the entire suppression of the character of Lady Macduff, and of the scenes in Macduff's castle, until his lady runs out pursued by the murderers. Here, indeed, is a mutilation quite unaccountable. It mars the whole spirit and moral of the play, to take anything from that depth and liveliness of interest which the dramatist has attached to the characters and fortunes of Macduff and his lady. They are the chief representatives in the piece, of the interests of loyalty and domestic affection, as opposed to those of the foulest treachery and the most selfish and remorseless ambition. After those successive gradations of atrocity, the treacherous murder of the king, the cowardly assassination of his chamberlains, and the flagitious taking-off of Banquo,—the wanton, savage, and undisguised slaughter of the defenceless wife and children, brought to the very eyes and ears of the auditor, carries his indignation to that final pitch of intensity which is necessary to make him sympathise to the full in the aspiration of the bereaved husband and father—

Gentle heaven,
Cut short all intermission; front to front

> Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;
> Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,
> Heaven forgive him too!

It is not enough that we should hear the story in the brief words in which it is related to him by his fugitive cousin, Rosse. The presence of the affectionate family before our eyes,—the timid lady's eloquent complaining to her cousin, of her husband's deserting them in danger,—the graceful prattle with her boy, in which she seeks relief from her melancholy forebodings,—and then, the sudden entrance of Macbeth's murderous ruffians,—are all requisite to give that crowning horror, that consummately and violently revolting character to Macbeth's career, which Shakespeare has so evidently studied to impress upon it. Nothing has more contributed to favour the false notion of a certain sympathy which the dramatist has been supposed to have excited for the character and fate of this most gratuitously criminal of all his heroes, than the theatrical narrowing of the space, and consequent weakening of the interest, which his unerring judgment has assigned in the piece to those representatives of the cause of virtue and humanity, for whom he has really sought to move the sympathies of his audience. It is no fault of his, if Macbeth's heartless whinings have ever extracted one emotion of pity from reader or auditor, in lieu of that intensely aggravated abhorrence which they ought to inspire. Macduff himself speaks not merely the language of his individual resentment, not only the public opinion of his suffering country, but the voice of common reason and humanity, where he says to Malcolm, even before he is acquainted with the destruction of his own family—

> Not in the legions
> Of horrid hell, can come a devil more damn'd
> In evils, to top Macbeth.

Further omissions still, though of lesser consequence, are to be regretted in the latter part of the acting play,—as that of the scene from which we have

already quoted, wherein Macbeth's revolted subjects first appear in arms — a necessary chapter in the history of his downfall, from which we cannot forbear citing the words in which Menteth so admirably characterizes the usurper's frantic state of mind—

> Who, then, shall blame
> His pester'd senses to recoil and start,
> *When all that is within him does condemn*
> *Itself for being there?*

Then, there is the death of young Siward by the hand of Macbeth, and his father's soldierly speech over him; which enhance the interest of the tyrant's combat with Macduff. To the alteration, in deference to modern taste, which makes Macbeth, in this conflict, fall and die upon the stage, we have nothing to object: only it is worth observing, that the very fact of Shakespeare's making Macduff, after killing his antagonist off the stage, re-enter with "the usurper's cursed head" upon a pole, is a final and striking indication that he meant Macbeth to die by all unpitied and abhorred.

The omission of Malcolm's concluding speech, however, seems to us to be alike needless and senseless. Shakespeare understood the art of appropriately closing a drama, no less than that of opening it happily. These lines from the restored prince not only draw together in one point, as is requisite, the several surviving threads of interest; but shew us decisively the predominant impression which the dramatist intended to leave on the minds of his audience. They are like a gleam of evening sunshine, bidding "farewell sweet," after "so fair and foul a day:"—

> We shall not spend a large expense of time,
> Before we reckon with your several loves,
> And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,
> Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland
> In such an honour nam'd. What's more to do,
> Which would be planted newly with the time,—
> As calling home our exil'd friends abroad,
> That fled the snares of watchful tyranny,—
> Producing forth the cruel ministers

Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life;—this, and what needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace
We will perform in measure, time, and place:
So, thanks to all at once, and to each one,
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

One reason of theatrical necessity, we are aware, is likely to be alleged in defence of these mutilations—the indispensability of shortening the performance, owing to the pressure of time occasioned by the modern arrangements of the stage. This plea might have been more readily admitted, were it not the fact that large insertions have been made and retained in the original play, which occupy full as much time upon the scene as the omitted passages would do. We must take it for granted, therefore, that both manager and audience, in retaining and sanctioning such a mass of alteration, believe that the piece gains more by the additions in question than it loses by the suppressions. Let us proceed to examine how far this opinion is well-grounded, by considering the history and the nature of these introductions by later hands into Shakespeare's drama.

It may clearly indicate the kind of taste which must have dictated these insertions, if we first of all mention that they date precisely from the period of the greatest degradation of the English theatre in general, whether in relation to art or to morality, and of the grossest and most audacious corruptions and profanations of the works of Shakespeare in particular. Among the heroes of this unenviable species of achievement, it was Davenant who undertook to *improve* and *civilize* 'Macbeth,' by metamorphosing it from the severest of tragedies into a sort of operatic medley. Not content with converting the anomalous, discordant beings of Shakespeare's imagining, into a set of melodious chanters, and surrounding them with a rabble rout of vulgar human figures and faces, he reformed the dialogue line by line,—shifted the characters about in the most arbitrary way,—introduced long rhyming

scenes, the offspring of "his own pure brain," between Macduff and his wife,—and added a grand piece of abusive scolding between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, representing the latter to be haunted by all manner of ghosts.

It was to the witch songs and choruses which Sir William inserted in this precious piece of work, that the fine music of Lock was composed, which has handed down these barbarous excrescences upon Shakespeare's drama to the present time. Seeing that all the rest of Davenant's abominable transformation has been repudiated ever since the days of Garrick, we will not waste our time and space upon considering it in detail: but the duty we have undertaken to discharge towards the fame and the genius of Shakespeare, imperatively demands that we should point out how utterly repugnant to the spirit of this great work are those presumptuous musical and scenic additions to it, which are still retained in spite of all the zeal and enthusiasm for redeeming our great dramatist from all manner of corruptions and perversions, which it is now so fashionable to profess.

First of all, then, we have the chain of interest which Shakespeare has so closely preserved between the completion of Macbeth's design against Duncan, and the formation of that against Banquo, interrupted by Davenant's rabble rout, with their

Speak, sister, speak—is the deed done? &c.

We have shown that Shakespeare uses the presence and the agency of his weird sisters most sparingly—only so far as is necessary to illustrate fully the headlong as well as headstrong nature of that selfish and violent cupidity which sways his hero. Their grotesquely and inharmoniously rhyming dialogues at the outset, are restricted to the narrowest space that could suffice to reveal to us a spirit in them of gratuitous and aimless mischief, corresponding to their anomalous exterior. The few brief words which they address to Macbeth and Banquo are just enough to serve the

double purpose,—on the one hand, of shewing us the previous guilty intention in the hero, and that intense eagerness in pursuit of it which, as we have said before, causes him to interpret the very announcement that he is to be king in any case, into an encouragement in that particular murderous design which he already harboured,—and on the other, of setting in movement the action of the drama, by thus confirming the traitor in his guilty purpose, and precipitating him toward its execution. We see, also, that his lady is yet less disposed than himself to await the destined course of events, notwithstanding that his unexpected creation as thane of Cawdor should have led them both to expect, if anything could, that the royalty also would come to them, by some means or other, "without their stir." So long as Macbeth finds all-sufficient support in the encouragement and concurrence of his lady, there needs no intervention of the weird sisters to carry on the series of tragic incident, the precipitous course of which the dramatist had too high and instinctive a mastery of his art, to interrupt by introducing them merely by way of idle and unmeaning decoration. It is not until after the banquet scene, when Macbeth resorts to them as the only counsellors from whom he has now to look for any encouragement in the "strange things" which he has "in head," that Shakespeare finds it proper to bring them again before us.

What, then, are we to think, when, instead of the suppressed passage which we have already cited, so fitly describing the heavy, reluctant daybreak after such a night of horror, we see the stage deluged with Davenant's mob of bedeviled women, old and young, in every variety of St. Giles's costume—a very train of Comus vulgarized—constantly exciting involuntary laughter in the audience—*laughter* on the very moment of the horrible discovery of Duncan's assassination, the moment of deepest horror in this deepest of tragedies! Seeing how general the misapprehension has been, we might shew some lenity

towards the false notion upon which this insertion is grounded, that the weird sisters had directly instigated the murder of Duncan; but how is it possible to forgive the disgusting violation of Shakespeare's own fundamental conception of their nature, which is involved in shewing us these airy beings, whom the poet has imagined incapable of human intercourse or sympathy, actually *elbowed* by a vulgar human multitude, and sharing in their low gambols and grimaces? And how, we would ask, after such a scene, are we to resume the broken thread of our impressions, so as to follow with adequate interest the ensuing course of incident relating to the murder of Banquo?

Again, what a strange substitution for that other omitted passage which we have quoted above, describing the progress of disaffection among Macbeth's adherents after Banquo's murder, is that concert of melodious spirits who are made to attend on Shakespeare's discordant Hecate, and the conversion of the latter from a purely ethereal being of evil, into a mere flesh-and-blood, sensual witch, who talks of *anointing* herself

> With new-fall'n dew
> From churchyard yew;

and says,—

> Oh, what a dainty pleasure's this,
> . . . . . .
> To sing, to toy, to dance, and kiss!

And finally, what a strange accompaniment are Davenant's rabble to Shakespeare's weird sisters and their mistress, in the incantation scene, the mysterious horror of which most especially demands the preservation of that immaterial, anomalous, and insulated character which their creator has assigned to them. This, we conceive, is the most villanous profanation of all.

The sole reason, we believe, that will now-a-days be alleged for retaining these monstrous blots upon so great a work of Shakespeare is, the merit and attraction of the music which accompanies them. These

we fully admit. The compositions in question are not only the masterpiece of their author, but one of the most vigorous productions of native English musical genius. Let them be performed and enjoyed anywhere and everywhere but in the representation of the greatest tragedy of the world's great dramatist—*for which representation*, let every auditor well observe, their author, Lock, *did not compose them.* For Davenant's abominable travesty were they written, and with that they ought to have been repudiated from the stage. The very restoration of Shakespeare's text in the rest of the performance, has but more glaringly brought out the shocking incongruity of these extraneous passages.

We come now to consider the other grand monstrosity which, introduced into this play, like the rest, by the men who had the forming of the stage of the Restoration, has, with them, been ever since retained —the dragging of the murdered Banquo bodily before the eyes of Macbeth and of the audience, in the banquet scene. This was an idea worthy of Davenant and his compeers, and consistent with the gross, incongruous texture of his corrupted play: but here, again, the general restoration of the text brings out this other disfigurement before us in all its atrocious and insulting absurdity.

Having already shown, at length, how studiously Shakespeare has wrought Macbeth's liability, under violent excitement, to perfect hallucination of the senses,—not only as a chief source of the poetic colouring of this piece, but as a mainspring of the tragic action,—we need not here repeat the argument. Indeed, we feel a sort of humiliation in reflecting that the inveterate attachment of managers and auditors to so glaring a perversion should compel us to insist for a single moment upon the fact, that so leading an intention of the dramatist, in this most conspicuous instance of its display, is not merely injured, but is utterly subverted, by placing before the hero's bodily eyes and ours an actual blood-stained figure;—the

result of which contrivance is, that so far from marvelling, as Shakespeare meant his audience to do, at the violence of imagination which could force so unreal an apparition upon Macbeth's "heat-oppressed brain," our wonder must be if he, or any man, were *not* to start and rave at the entrance of so strange a visitor; not to mention the precious outrage to our senses, in the visibility of this unaccountable personage to us, the distant audience, while he is invisible to every one of the guests who crowd the table at which he seats himself in the only vacant chair!

But, gross as these disfigurements are, of this grand work of the greatest of artists, even these are not the most essential perversions of its spirit that have descended to us among those traditions from a corrupt and degenerate stage, which, to this very hour, have resisted the growth amongst us of a profounder and more enlightened literary criticism of Shakespeare. The most hurtful of these traditionary notions respecting 'Macbeth,' are to be found in the radically false conception and representation of its two leading characters, which the actors of them have perpetuated through the whole modern era of our theatrical history. It is the more indispensable, before dismissing our present subject, to consider these histrionic misinterpretations,—because, owing to the great frequency of performance which this piece has constantly maintained, this, we are persuaded, is one of the most signal instances of all in which the misconception of the actor has reacted upon the judgment of the critic,—forcibly illustrating the importance even to a perfectly intelligent *reading* of Shakespeare, that the public mind should be disabused of erroneous prepossessions having their source wholly or partly in mere *theatrical* prescription.

6.—FALSE ACTING OF THE TWO PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

We cannot here examine into the several varieties of expression which, in the representation of the hero, have marked respectively the acting of a Garrick or a Kemble, a Kean or a Macready,—resulting from their personal peculiarities, their particular mannerisms, or their different conceptions as to matters of detail. We have to do at present only with the one grand misconception which has pervaded all these personations,—that of regarding Macbeth as a man originally good, sympathetic, tender-hearted, generous, and grateful, until the ambitious and treacherous purpose of murdering his king is first suggested to him by the weird sisters, and then confirmed in him by the instigations of his wife. This capital error at the outset has betrayed the actors, like the critics, into mistaking the language of his selfish apprehensions for the expressions of compunction and remorse, and his equally selfish bewailings over his own difficulties and downfall, for generous effusions of sympathetic humanity. John Kemble's view of the matter, which we find recorded under his own hand, so fairly represents the constant stage notion upon the subject, that a general indication of it will suffice to shew the still subsisting theatrical creed respecting Macbeth's character.

In the year 1785, then, the year in which Mrs. Siddons first acted Lady Macbeth on the London stage, there appeared, in the form of an octavo pamphlet, a posthumous essay, from the pen of Mr. Thomas Whately (uncle of the present Dr. Whately, archbishop of Dublin), known also as the author of 'Observations on Modern Gardening,'—under the title of 'Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakespeare.' The piece itself, however, is but a fragment of a larger work which its author had projected—extending only

to the completion of a running parallel between the character of Macbeth and that of Richard the Third. This essay, which acquired and has retained a high critical reputation, produced from John Kemble, in the following year, another pamphlet, inscribed to Edmund Malone, and entitled 'Macbeth Reconsidered; an Essay intended as an Answer to part of the Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakespeare.' Mr. Kemble, however, limits his strictures to a refutation, which we think just and conclusive, of Mr. Whately's denial of personal courage as a quality inherent in Macbeth. To the rest of the essayist's argument he thus emphatically expresses his assent:—"The writer of the above pages cannot conclude without saying, he read the 'Remarks on some of Shakespeare's Characters' with so much general pleasure and conviction, that he wishes his approbation were considerable enough to increase the celebrity which Mr. Wheatley's [Whately's] memory has acquired from a work so usefully intended and so elegantly performed." In Mr. Whately's view of the matter, then (which, indeed, we find still appealed to as an authority), we shall see what was Kemble's "conviction" as to the essential qualities in the character of Macbeth.

Having already argued the whole matter so elaborately from the simple evidence of Shakespeare's text, we shall here confine ourselves to citing from Mr. Whately's pages those passages which most strikingly exhibit in his mind that leading view of Macbeth's qualities, the fallacy of which we have demonstrated at length in our foregoing examination. Mr. Whately, then, tells us at the very outset:—

"The first thought of succeeding to the throne is suggested, and success in the attempt is promised, to Macbeth by the witches: he is therefore represented as a man whose natural temper would have deterred him from such a design, if he had not been immediately tempted and strongly impelled to it.

"Agreeably to these ideas," he continues, "Macbeth appears to be a man not destitute of the feelings of humanity. His lady gives him that character:

I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way.——

Which apprehension was well founded; for his reluctance to commit the murder is owing, in a great measure, to reflections which arise from sensibility:

He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject;
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself.——

Immediately after, he tells Lady Macbeth—

We will proceed no further in this business;
He hath honour'd me of late.——

And thus giving way to his natural feelings of kindred, hospitality, and gratitude, he for a while lays aside his purpose.

"A man of such a disposition will esteem, as they ought to be esteemed, all gentle and amiable qualities in another; and therefore Macbeth is affected by the mild virtues of Duncan, and reveres them in his sovereign when he stifles them in himself."—Pp. 11, 12.

It is very curious to mark how this fallacious prepossession betrays the essayist into citing that very soliloquy respecting Banquo, which we have pointed out as peculiarly illustrating the dark intensity of Macbeth's apprehensive selfishness,—as proving his humane and sympathetic nature:—

"The frequent reference to the prophecy in favour of Banquo's issue is another symptom of the same disposition; for it, is not always from fear, but sometimes from envy, that he alludes to it: and being himself very susceptible of those domestic affections which raise a desire and love of posterity, he repines at the succession assured to the family of his rival, and which in his estimation seems more valuable than his own actual possession. He therefore reproaches the sisters for their partiality when

Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If 'tis so,
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind,
. . . . . .
Rather than so, come, Fate, into the list, &c.

"Thus, in a variety of instances, does the tenderness in his

character shew itself; and one who has these feelings, though he may have no principles, cannot easily be induced to commit a murder. The intervention of a supernatural cause accounts for his acting so contrary to his disposition. But that alone is not sufficient to prevail entirely over his nature; the instigations of his wife are also necessary to keep him to his purpose; and she, knowing his temper, not only stimulates his courage to the deed, but sensible that, besides a backwardness in daring, he had a degree of softness which wanted hardening, endeavours to remove all remains of humanity from his breast, by the horrid comparison she makes between him and herself:—

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I but so sworn,
> As you have done to this.

"The argument is, that the strongest and most natural affections are to be stifled upon so great an occasion; and such an argument is proper to persuade one who is liable to be swayed by them; but is no incentive either to his courage or his ambition."—Pp. 13—15.

That Macbeth, indeed, is not naturally and inherently ambitious, we find Mr. Whately continually urging. Thus, again (page 27):—

"The crown is not Macbeth's pursuit through life: he had never thought of it till it was suggested to him by the witches: he receives their promise, and the subsequent earnest of the truth of it, with calmness. But his wife, whose thoughts are always more aspiring, hears the tidings with rapture, and greets him with the most extravagant congratulations: she complains of his moderation; the utmost merit she can allow him is, that he is 'not without ambition.' But it is cold and faint," &c.

The essayist's determinedly erroneous bias regarding the alleged *tenderness* of Macbeth's nature, shews itself in no place more curiously than in the passage (p. 71) where he tells us of "the sympathy he expresses so feelingly when the diseased mind of Lady Macbeth is mentioned;" except, indeed, it be in that subsequent paragraph (p. 73) where he actually tells us of the hero at his last extremity:—

"The natural sensibility of his disposition finds even in the field an opportunity to work; where he declines to fight with

Macduff, not from fear, but from a consciousness of the wrongs he had done to him: he therefore answers his provoking challenge, only by saying,—

Of all men else I have avoided thee, &c.

and then patiently endeavours to persuade this injured adversary to desist from so unequal a combat; for he is confident that it must be fatal to Macduff, and therefore tells him,—

——— Thou losest labour, &c."

The general adhesion to Mr. Whately's views which we have cited above from Mr. Kemble's pamphlet, is sufficiently explicit; but, although the body of the latter essay is occupied almost exclusively with asserting Macbeth's personal intrepidity against the former writer's opinion, yet, in the course of it, the great actor does incidentally shew us in detail the coincidence which he avows in general terms, of his own leading conceptions of the character with those of Mr. Whately. Thus, at the outset, he speaks (p. 5) of "the simple character of Macbeth, as it stands before any change is effected in it by the supernatural soliciting of the weird sisters." And respecting Macbeth's declining of the combat with Macduff, he mistakes even more elaborately than Mr. Whately himself:—

"When," says Mr. Kemble, "the thane of Fife encounters Macbeth in battle, the tyrant does not use the power upon his life which he believes himself possessed of, as instantly he would had he feared him; but, yielding to compunction for the inhuman wrongs he had done him, wishes to avoid the necessity of adding Macduff's blood to that already spilt in the slaughter of his dearest connexions,—

——— Get thee back, &c.

Unmoved by Macduff's taunts and furious attack, Macbeth advises him to employ his valour where success may follow it, and generously warns him against persisting to urge an unequal combat with one whom destiny had pronounced invincible."—P. 21.

In the same spirit the writer, closing his essay with comparing, like his precursor Mr. Whately, the character of Macbeth with that of Richard, observes

(p. 36):—"Richard is only intrepid; Macbeth intrepid and feeling. . . . Macbeth, distracted by remorse, *loses all apprehension of danger in the contemplation of his guilt.*" We leave it, however, for such readers as may have followed us through our previous examination of the character and the piece, to determine for themselves, whether it would not much more nearly express the actual truth, were we to say, precisely reversing this last remark of Mr. Kemble's, that Macbeth *loses all contemplation of his guilt in the apprehension of danger.*

The memory of every reader who has repeatedly witnessed the performance of this tragedy on the modern stage, will remind him how constantly, in all the impassioned passages of this part, the actor's tone and gesture, following Mr. Kemble's notion of the character, falsify Shakespeare's own conception,—how, in the earlier scenes, the remorsefully reluctant, and in the later the repentant criminal, is continually substituted for that heartless slave of mere selfish apprehensiveness whom the dramatist has so distinctly delineated.

Mrs. Siddons herself, then, may well be deemed excusable if, under the guidance of such respectable and respected authorities, she shared in the prevalent misapprehension as to the essential character of the hero in the very tragedy wherein she attained her proudest histrionic distinction. But so radical a misconception *there*, necessarily entailed a corresponding one of equal magnitude respecting the attendant character which she so powerfully personated; and this it is that we must now proceed to shew from her own manuscript remarks upon Lady Macbeth, as laid before us by her last biographer.

Starting with the grand original error, that Macbeth had not imagined the murder of Duncan until it was suggested to him by the weird sisters,—nor his lady until she received his letter communicating their prophecy,—Mrs. Siddons naturally falls into the common misinterpretation of the lady's soliloquy—

Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness, &c.

This, which on the page of Shakespeare stands only as *Lady Macbeth's* idea of her husband's character at that particular time, the fair critic interprets as *the dramatist's own* conception of Macbeth's inherent nature. "In this developement," says she, "we find that, though ambitious, he is yet amiable, conscientious—nay pious." And yet the concluding observation—

Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do, if thou have me,'
And that which *rather thou dost fear to do,*
Than wishest should be undone,—

should shew to any student of the part, that Lady Macbeth herself, with all her prepossession as to her husband's compunctious nature, is here led into a strong suspicion of what was his real character. What, indeed, are her words last cited, but an echo of Macbeth's previous exclamation—

Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires!
The eye wink at the hand—*yet let that be*
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see!

"All that impedes him from the golden round" is, not a shrinking from guilt, but the dread of consequences. Mrs. Siddons, however, proceeding on the same false bias, imagines that it is not merely his selfish fears, but his virtuous repugnance, that his lady is so eager to "chastise with the valour of her tongue." Somewhat strangely forgetting the concluding words of Macbeth's letter, which she has just been quoting at length, she commits the oversight of Coleridge in interpreting that very exclamation of Lady Macbeth's—"Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!"—which shews her boundless devotion to her husband's wish and purpose, into a proof of purely selfish ambition in her own breast, and utter disregard of that husband's welfare. "Shortly," says Mrs. Siddons, "Macbeth appears. He announces the king's approach; and

she, insensible, it should seem, to all the perils which he has encountered in battle, and to all the happiness of his safe return to her,—for not one kind word of greeting or congratulation does she offer,—is so entirely swallowed up by the horrible design, which has probably been suggested to her by his letters, as to have entirely forgotten both the one and the other." The forgetfulness, however, as we have fully shown, is not in Lady Macbeth's mind on this occasion, but in that of her critical representative. So fully was the latter possessed with this notion, that she thus continues:—"It is very remarkable that Macbeth is frequent in expressions of tenderness to his wife, while she never betrays one symptom of affection towards him, till, in the fiery furnace of affliction, her iron heart is melted down to softness."

After all we have said already, we think it needless to insist further on the radical fallacy of this notion about Lady Macbeth's want of feeling for her husband; but we must here offer a word of illustration respecting Macbeth's "expressions of tenderness to his wife;" for in nothing, we conscientiously believe, has Shakespeare more admirably painted the fawning cowardice of the selfish man, than in the manner wherein these very expressions are introduced. It is not *her* need of aid or comfort that ever draws these marks of fondness from him; we find them in every instance produced by some pressure of difficulty or perplexity upon *himself*, which he feels his own resolution unequal to meet, and so flies for support to her superior firmness: he does not consult her as to the *formation* of his purposes—he is too selfish and too headstrong for that; he simply uses her moral courage, as he seeks to use all other things, as an indispensable instrument to stay his own faltering steps, and urge on his hesitating march towards the fulfilment of a purpose *already formed.* Thus, the most remarkable of these fond appeals to his lady for moral support, bursts from him at the moment when he comes to announce to her the sudden arrival of the wished-for opportunity of executing their grand and long-meditated design:—

My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night.

It is not that Macbeth wavers either in his desire of the object or in his liking for the means; but that, the more imminent he feels the execution to be, the more he shrinks from the worldly responsibility that may follow, and the more he is driven to lean for support on the moral resolution of his wife. At his parting with the king, after saying,

I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach,

immediately follows his eager exclamation, which the inveterate misapprehension on the subject compels us to repeat again and again:—

Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires!
The eye wink at the hand—yet *let that be,*
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see!

After this it seems truly strange that such a critic as Coleridge, for instance, should suppose for a moment that Macbeth's very next words, "My dearest love, Duncan comes here to-night," may imply a relenting from his purpose—how much soever they may indicate a faltering in its execution. His selfish pusillanimity is simply seeking to cast upon *her* the burden of the final decision as to the act of murder. When to her own suggestive query, "And when goes hence?" he answers, "To-morrow—as he purposes," is it not most clear that, still avoiding an explicit declaration of his immediate wish, he persists in urging the first utterance of it from her own lips:—

Oh, never
Shall sun that morrow see!——
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: *look* like the innocent flower,
But *be* the serpent under it. He that's coming
Must be provided for; and you shall put
This night's great business into *my* despatch,
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom!

This is exactly what her husband has been looking for: she has now taken the actual effort and immediate responsibility of the deed upon herself. Nevertheless, the selfishly covetous and murderous coward still affects to hesitate—

> We will speak further.——

She knows his meaning, and rejoins;—

> Only look up clear;—
> To alter favour, ever is to fear:
> *Leave all the rest to me.*

And to her, well understanding her intention, Macbeth is well pleased, at that moment, so to leave it.

Yet we find Mrs. Siddons, misled by the critical oracles of her day, constantly talking as if, in all this, it were not merely selfish fear in Macbeth, but virtuous repugnance, that his lady is chiding—as if she were not merely ministering to him the resolution to fulfil his own purpose, but urging upon him the purpose itself, as hers rather than his. Under this mistaken impression she proceeds:—

"On the arrival of the amiable monarch who had so honoured him of late, *his naturally benevolent and good feelings* resume their wonted power. He then solemnly communes with his heart, and after much powerful reasoning upon the danger of the undertaking, calling to mind that Duncan his king, of the mildest virtues, and his kinsman, lay as his guest, —all those accumulated determents, with the violated rights of sacred hospitality *bringing* up the rear, rising all at once in terrible array to his awakened conscience, he relinquishes the atrocious purpose, and wisely *determines* to proceed no further in the business. But now, behold, his evil genius, his grave-charm, appears; and by the force of her revilings, her contemptuous taunts, and, above all, by her opprobrious aspersion of cowardice, chases *the gathering drops of humanity* from his eyes, and drives before her impetuous and destructive career *all those kindly charities, those impressions of loyalty, and pity, and gratitude*, which, but the moment before, had taken full possession of his mind. . . . She makes her very virtues the means of a taunt to her lord:—'You have the milk of human kindness in your heart,' she says (in substance) to him, 'but ambition, which is my ruling passion, would be also yours if you had courage. With a hankering desire to suppress, if you could, all your weaknesses of sympathy, you are too

cowardly to will the deed, and can only dare to wish it. You speak of sympathies and feelings: I too have felt with a tenderness which your sex cannot know; but *I* am resolute, in *my* ambition, to trample on all that obstructs *my* way to a crown. Look to me, and be ashamed of your weakness.'"

It is under this constantly false notion, that Lady Macbeth is instigating her husband's heart to the purpose, when she is only exciting his courage to the execution, that the great actress imagines the mental and personal graces of this heroine to have been such as alone "could have composed a charm of such potency as to fascinate the mind of a hero so dauntless, a character so *amiable*, so *honourable* as Macbeth —to *seduce* him to brave all the dangers of the present and all the terrors of a future world; and we are constrained, even whilst we abhor his crimes, to pity *the infatuated victim of such a thraldom.*" The same erroneous prepossession leads the fair critic into the common mistake of supposing that Lady Macbeth's remark respecting Banquo and Fleance,

> But in them nature's copy's not eterne,

is a conscious suggesting of their assassination; and upon this she grounds another very curious misconception:—

"Having, therefore, now filled the measure of her crimes, I have imagined that the last appearance of Banquo's ghost became no less visible to her eyes than it became to those of her husband. Yes, the spirit of the noble Banquo has smilingly filled up, even to overflowing, and now commends to her own lips, the ingredients of her poisoned chalice."

From all this it results, that Mrs. Siddons endeavoured to act the earlier scenes of this great part too much as if she had to represent a woman inherently selfish and imperious, not devoted to the wish and purpose of her husband, but remorselessly determined to work him to the fulfilment of her own. This is confirmed by all records and reminiscences of her acting that we can collect. Yet it is remarkable that her last biographer objects to her Lady Macbeth as not being a sufficiently pure impersonation of selfish

ambition. "By concentrating all the springs of her conduct into the one determined feeling of ambition," says Mr. Campbell, "the mighty poet has given her character *a statue-like simplicity*, which, though cold, is spirit-stirring, from the wonder it excites." We shall not go again over the argument we have detailed already, that Lady Macbeth is *criminally* ambitious *for her husband*, even as Constance, in 'King John,' for example, is *virtuously* ambitious *for her son*—that, with this modification only, conjugal affection is the mainspring of the former character, as maternal affection is of the latter. But Mr. Campbell argues the matter in the following terms:—

"As to her ardent affections, I would ask, on what other object on earth she bestows them except the crown of Scotland? We are told, however, that her husband loves her, and that therefore she could not be naturally bad. But, in the first place, though we are not directly told so, we may be fairly allowed to imagine her a very beautiful woman; and, with beauty and superior intellect, it is easy to conceive her managing and making herself necessary to Macbeth, a man comparatively weak, and, as we see, facile to wickedness. There are instances of *atrocious* women having swayed the hearts of *more amiable* men."

After all that we have said before, it seems hardly necessary again to point out what a constant mistaking in all this there is, of mere *moral cowardice* in Macbeth for *virtuous repugnance*,—and what vital injustice to the character of his lady, in making her responsible—not merely, as is the fact, for holding him to the fulfilment of his own constant wish and purpose—but for inspiring him with the purpose itself. The same erroneous bias leads the same elegant critic into the following assertion of this heroine's utter want of sympathy and remorse:—

"It seems to me, also, to be far from self-evident that Lady Macbeth is not naturally cruel because she calls on all the demons of human thought to unsex her, or because she dies of what her apologist [Mrs. Jameson] calls remorse. If by that word we mean true contrition, Shakspeare gives no proof of her having shown such a feeling. Her death is mysterious; and we generally attribute it to despair and suicide. Even her

terrible and thrice-repeated sob of agony in the sleep-walking scene, shews a conscience haunted indeed by terrors, but not penitent; for she still adheres to her godless old ground of comfort, that *Banquo is in his grave.*"

Again:—

"I am persuaded that Shakspeare never meant her for anything better than a character of superb depravity, and a being, with all her decorum and force of mind, naturally *cold* and *remorseless*. When Mrs. Jameson asks us, What might not religion have made of such a character? she asks a question that will equally apply to every other enormous criminal; for the worst heart that ever beat in a human breast would be at once rectified if you could impress it with a genuine religious faith. But if Shakspeare intended us to believe Lady Macbeth's nature a soil peculiarly adapted for the growth of religion, he has chosen a way very unlike his own wisdom in portraying her, for he exhibits her as a practical infidel in a simple age; and he makes her words sum up all the essence of that unnatural irreligion, which cannot spring up to the head without having its root in a callous heart. She holds that

> The sleeping and the dead
> Are but as pictures,

and that

> Things without remedy
> Should be without regard.

There is something hideous in the very strength of her mind, that can dive down, like a wounded monster, to such depths of consolation."

Now, we must be permitted to point out the strange oversight committed by the writer of these paragraphs, in speaking of those maxims of consolation and tranquillization which Lady Macbeth addresses *for those especial purposes* to her agitated husband *under those peculiar circumstances*, as if, in her own breast, she held them for all-consolatory truths. Not only the very sleep-walking scene in question, but various other passages which we have had occasion to cite, prove abundantly that they are anything but satisfactory to her own conscience.

Mr. Campbell thus concludes:—

"She is a splendid picture of evil, nevertheless, a sort of sister of Milton's Lucifer; and, like him, we surely imagine her externally majestic and beautiful. Mrs. Siddons's idea of her

having been a delicate and blonde beauty, seems to me to be a pure caprice. The public would have ill exchanged for such a representative of Lady Macbeth the dark locks and the eagle eyes of Mrs. Siddons."

With all submission, however, to the biographer's judgment, this notion of the great actress as to Shakespeare's conception of Lady Macbeth's personal appearance, is anything but capricious; she assigns a valid reason for it. After imagining the heroine as one "in whose composition are associated all the subjugating powers of intellect, and all the charms and graces of personal beauty," she thus proceeds:—

"You will probably not agree with me as to the character of that beauty; yet, perhaps, this difference of opinion will be entirely attributable to the difficulty of your imagination disengaging itself from that idea of the person of her representative which you have been so long accustomed to contemplate. According to my notion, it is of that character which I believe *is generally allowed to be most captivating to the other sex*,—fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile—

> Fair as the forms that, wove in Fancy's loom,
> Float in light visions round the poet's head.

Such a combination only, respectable in energy and strength of mind, and captivating in feminine loveliness, could have composed a charm of such potency as to fascinate the mind of a hero so dauntless," &c.*

Now, although the dramatist has clearly represented his hero and heroine as persons of middle age, and absorbed in an ambitious enterprise which little admits of any of the lighter expressions of conjugal tenderness, yet the words which drop from Macbeth—"my dearest love," "dearest chuck," "sweet remembrancer," &c.—do imply a very genuinely feminine attraction on the part of his wife. As for mere *complexion*, in this instance, as in most others, Shakespeare, perhaps for obvious reasons of theatrical convenience, appears to have given no particular indication; but that he conceived his Lady Macbeth as decidedly and even softly feminine in person, results not only from the language addressed to her by her husband, but from all that we know of those principles of harmonious contrast

which Shakespeare invariably follows in his greatest works.

In the present instance it pleased him to reverse the usual order of things, by attributing to his hero what is commonly regarded as the feminine irritability of fancy and infirmity of resolution. To render this peculiarity of character more striking, he has contrasted it with the most undoubted physical courage, personal strength and prowess;—in short, he has combined in Macbeth an eminently masculine person with a spirit in other respects eminently feminine, but utterly wanting the feminine generosity of affection. To this character, thus contrasted within itself, he has opposed a female character presenting a contrast exactly the reverse of the former. No one doubts that he has shown us in the spirit of Lady Macbeth that masculine firmness of will which he has made wanting in her husband. The strictest analogy, then, would lead him to complete the harmonizing contrast of the two characters, by enshrining this "undaunted mettle" of hers in a frame as exquisitely feminine as her husband's is magnificently manly. This was requisite, also, in order to make her taunts of Macbeth's irresolution operate with the fullest intensity. Such sentiments from the lips of what is called a masculine-looking or speaking woman, have little moral energy, compared with what they derive from the ardent utterance of a delicately feminine voice and feature.

Mrs. Siddons, then, we believe, judged more correctly in this matter than the public, who, as her biographer tells us, would have ill exchanged her "dark locks and eagle eyes" for such a Lady Macbeth as she herself imagined. In this particular her sagacious reading of Shakespeare is no less remarkable than her womanly candour; while the public, it is plain, have been led by nothing but that force of association which her own powerful personation had impressed upon them. So powerful, indeed, was it, as to lead Mr. Campbell, in conclusion, to tell us emphatically:—

"In some other characters which Mrs. Siddons performed, the memory of the old, or the imagination of the young, might possibly conceive her to have had a substitute; but not in *Lady Macbeth*. The moment she seized the part, she identified her image with it in the minds of the living generation."

The fact of this thorough identification in the public mind makes it incumbent on us to shew the divergence of Mrs. Siddons's embodiment of the character from Shakespeare's delineation of it, not only as we have done already, from the *d priori* evidence afforded by her own account of how she *endeavoured* to play it, but also from the most authentic traditions as to her *actual expression* of the part. In doing this, we must limit our examination of that great performance to demonstrating;—first, the fallacious impression given by the actress as to the moral relation in general subsisting between Lady Macbeth and her husband; and secondly, her like erroneous interpreting of the relation between the lady's own conscience and the great criminal act to which she is accessary.

All accounts, then, of Mrs. Siddons's acting in the earlier scenes, concur in assuring us that she did most effectively represent the heroine as we have seen, from her written remarks upon the character, that she endeavoured to represent her,—as a woman, we repeat, *inherently selfish and imperious—not devoted to the wish and purpose of her husband, but remorselessly determined to work him to the fulfilment of her own.* The three great passages which most prominently develope this conception, are, that in which Lady Macbeth takes upon herself the execution of the murderous enterprise; that where she banishes Macbeth's apprehensions of odium by her taunts, and his fears of retribution by suggesting the expedient of casting suspicion on the sleeping attendants; and finally, that in which she endeavours to calm his agitation after the murder.

After perusing the passages above-cited from Mrs. Siddons's Remarks, we may well give credit, for instance, to Mr. Boaden's assurance, in describing her first performance of Lady Macbeth in London, that she delivered the speech,

Oh, never
Shall sun *that* morrow see, &c.

in such a manner that "Macbeth himself (Smith) sank under her at once, and she quitted the scene with an effect which cannot be described;"*—that is, she assumed the tone and air, not of *earnest entreaty*, which alone Shakespeare's heroine could have employed on this occasion, but of *imperious injunction;* so that Macbeth's representative, instead of complacently acquiescing, as Shakespeare's conception requires, seemed to yield to her will in pure helplessness. So, again, in the scene where the lady overcomes her husband's apprehensive shrinking from the actual deed, the same theatrical historian informs us:—

"Filled from the crown to the toe with direst cruelty, the horror of the following sentence seemed bearable from its fitness to such a being. But I yet wonder at the *energy* of both utterance and action with which it was accompanied:—

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And *dash'd the brains out,* had I *so sworn* as you
Have done to this.

There was no *qualifying* with our humanity in the tone or gesture. This really beautiful and interesting actress did not at all shrink from standing before us the true and perfect image of the greatest of all natural and moral depravations—a *fiend-like woman.*"

Here, again, we trace the tones and gestures, not of vehement *expostulation,* but of overbearing *dictation;* not of earnest appeal to her husband's capability of being constant to his own purpose, but of *ruthless and scornful determination* to drive him on to the execution of hers. And once more, to reach the climax of this false interpretation, how intensely effective do we find the actress's expression to have been, of her mistaken conception that Lady Macbeth, all this while, regards her husband with *sincere* contempt:—

"Upon her return from the chamber of slaughter," says Mr. Boaden, "after gilding the faces of the grooms, from the

* 'Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons,' vol. ii. p. 136.

peculiar character of her lip she gave an expression of *contempt* more striking than any she had hitherto displayed."

The general character of this part of her performance is summed up to the like effect by an eloquent writer in a recent number of 'Blackwood's Magazine,' who, in recording his admiring reminiscences of Mrs. Siddons's Lady Macbeth, assures us that, in the murder scene, "her acting was that of a triumphant fiend."*

But, in examining the play, we have shown how Shakespeare exhibits the heroine as anything but *triumphant* in the perpetration of the deed, her husband's ruminations upon which draw from her an anticipation of that remorseful distraction which is destined to destroy her. We have shown, too, how remote she is from that *bitterness of contempt* which Mrs. Siddons expressed with such intensity, but which policy no less than feeling must have banished from Shakespeare's heroine while she felt her very self-preservation to depend upon her *calming* the nervous agitation of her husband. Shakespeare, in short, from the very commencement of Lady Macbeth's share in the action, has exhibited in her—not that "statue-like simplicity" of motive for which Mr. Campbell contends, and which Mrs. Siddons strove to render—but a continual *struggle*, between her compunction for the criminal act, and her devotion to her husband's ambitious purpose. This conscious struggle should give to the opening invocation—

> Come, come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, &c.—

a *tremulous anxiety* as well as earnestness of expression, very different from what we find recorded respecting this part of Mrs. Siddons's performance:—

"When the actress," says Mr. Boaden, "invoking the destroying ministers, came to the passage—

* 'Marston; or, the Memoirs of a Statesman.'—*Blackwood's Magazine*, June, 1843, p. 710.

Wherever, in your sightless substances,
You wait on nature's mischief,

the elevation of her brows, the full orbs of sight, the raised shoulders, and the hollowed hands, seemed all to endeavour to explore what yet were pronounced no possible objects of vision. Till then, I am quite sure, a figure so terrible had never bent over the pit of a theatre."

In all this we perceive the gesture of one—not *imploring* the spirits of murder, as Shakespeare's heroine does—but *commanding* them, according to Mrs. Siddons's conception. *The action*, in short, *is not suited to the word.* The same must be said of her performance of the great sleep-walking scene, though regarded as Mrs. Siddons's grandest triumph in this part. Here, of all other passages in this personation, the actress's looking and speaking the *impassive* heroine of antique tragedy was out of place. A somnambulist from the workings of a troubled conscience, is a thing peculiar to the romantic drama, and impossible in the classic. A person such as Mrs. Siddons's acting represented Lady Macbeth to be, would have been quite incapable of that "slumbry agitation" in which we behold Shakespeare's heroine. As little could the latter, while under its influence, have maintained the statue-like solemnity with which the actress glided over the stage in this awful scene. We have shown already that Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, so far from presenting, in this final passage, anything of the "unconquerable will" of a classic heroine, is, in her incoherent retrospection, the merely passive victim of remorse and of despair—helplessly tremulous and shuddering. "But Siddons," says the writer in Blackwood already cited, "wanted the agitation, the drooping, the timidity. She looked a living statue. She spoke with the solemn tone of a voice from a shrine. She stood more the *sepulchral avenger* of regicide than the *sufferer* from its convictions. Her grand voice, her fixed and marble countenance, and her silent step, gave the impression

of a supernatural being, the genius of an ancient oracle—a tremendous Nemesis."

"She was a living Melpomene," says the same writer in conclusion; and this is evidently what Mr. Campbell means by saying "she was Tragedy personified." But the muse of the classic tragedy, and the muse of the romantic, of which the Shakespearian is the summit, are personages exceedingly different. They who cite Mrs. Siddons's Lady Macbeth as exhibiting the highest developement of her histrionic powers, are perfectly right; but when they speak of it as transcendently proving her fitness for interpreting Shakespeare, they are as decidedly wrong. It is not "a *statue-like* simplicity," to repeat Mr. Campbell's phrase, that makes the essence of Shakespearian character,—but a *picturesque* complexity—to which Mrs. Siddons's massive person and sculptured genius were essentially repugnant. Her genius, indeed, has been well described as rather epic than dramatic, rather Miltonian than Shakespearian. Justice to Mrs. Siddons, and justice to Shakespeare, alike demand that this should be clearly and universally understood. The best homage to genius like hers, as to genius like his, must be, to appreciate it, not only adequately, but *truly*.

After all that we have said, it may well be supposed that we have little desire to see or hear of any future performance of this play which shall not be conducted on the principle of thorough fidelity to the spirit of its great author. He, indeed, thought proper to exhibit in its hero the most poetical of selfishly ambitious assassins; but could little contemplate that his "black Macbeth" was to be converted into the sentimental butcher of our modern stage—a conception much more worthy of a Kotzebue than of a Shakespeare. It is high time that this national disgrace should be wiped away. The operatic insertions, founded, as we have seen, upon a total inversion of the dramatist's own meaning and purpose in the preternatural agency, must be utterly banished—they

are as insufferable here as they would be in 'Richard the Third,' or in 'Othello,' or in 'Hamlet.' The suppressed scenes and passages must be restored. And, above all, the two leading characters must be truly personated. Then, but not till then, shall we see the moral of this great tragedy resume, in our theatres, its pristine dignity. Our sympathies will no longer be vulgarly and mischievously appealed to in behalf of a falsely-supposed passive victim of demoniacal instigations, but will find that natural and healthy channel into which the great moralist has really directed them. We shall see on the stage, as we do in the text of Shakespeare, that when a character of the highest nervous irritability, but quite devoid of sympathy, is once attracted to the pursuit of a selfishly and criminally ambitious object, its career will of necessity be as destructive to the nearest domestic ties as to political and social security. Above all, we shall cease to have obtruded upon us that mistaken poetical justice which consists in making *every sort* of criminal be punished by *repentance* in this life. Shakespeare knew much better. It is one of his greatest titles to the gratitude of mankind, that he shrunk not from shewing his auditors that there are certain kinds of villains who can never know *remorse*, because they are utterly incapable of *sympathy*. One of these is, the *blunt, honest-looking* knave, whom he has portrayed in Iago: another is, the *poetically whining* villain, whom he has exhibited in Macbeth. The mighty artist wasted not his moralizing on persuading inherent villany to be honest; he expended it more profitably, in teaching the honest man to see through the fairest visor of the incurable knave.

We are the more encouraged to hope for a just theatrical rendering of this great creation, by the fact that we possess a rising Shakespearian actress of the highest promise. Among the wide range of Shakespearian characters in which this lady has already exhibited such various powers, it is her persona-

tion of the Lady Constance in the splendid revival of 'King John' which made so large a figure in the last Drury-Lane season, that peculiarly demands attention in reference to our immediate subject. In this part, as in that of Lady Macbeth, the most respectable efforts since Mrs. Siddons's time had never amounted to anything beyond a vastly inferior expression of Mrs. Siddons's conception of the character, to which the stage, as well as the audience, were accustomed to bow with a sort of religious faith and awe. The bias which the peculiar character of her genius gave to her personation of the heroine of 'King John,' will be found strictly analogous to that which marked her representation of Macbeth's consort. She made strong-willed ambition the ruling motive of Constance, rather than maternal affection. But Miss Helen Faucit, led, it should seem, by that intuitive sympathy of genius which has guided her happy embodiment of other Shakespearian creations, upon which the great actress of the Kemble school had not so powerfully set her stamp, has courageously but wisely disregarded theatrical prescription in the matter,—has followed steadily the unsullied light of Shakespeare's words,—and so has found for herself, and shown to her audience, that feeling, not pride, is the mainspring of the character.*

It would, therefore, be most interesting to see this rising actress exercise her unbiassed judgment and her flexible powers upon the personation of Lady Macbeth, in lieu of that mistaken interpretation which, in Mrs. Siddons's hands, however objectionable as an illustration of Shakespeare, was grand and noble in itself, but which, in those of her later imitators, has become merely harsh and disgusting. Nor would it be interesting only; it would be highly important towards disabusing the public mind of that vitiated moral with which the corrupt representation of this play has so long infected it.

Herein we see the truly national importance of

* See "Female Characters in 'King John,'—Acting of The Lady Constance,"—pp. 26 to 37 of this volume.

Shakespearian acting, no less than of Shakespearian criticism. How much our national reputation is concerned in a more intelligent cultivation of the latter, it is needless now to contend, as the fact is universally admitted. But the degree in which the current state of Shakespearian *acting* constantly operates, for good or for evil, in illustration or in perversion, upon the *reader* and the *literary critic* of Shakespeare, seems less generally understood. Yet this operation is not the less certain, nor is it difficult to assign its cause. The intense depth and subtlety of meaning—the boundless pregnancy of indication—the "too much conceiving," as Milton says—which is found in the written text, renders the thorough understanding of it the more dependent on the truth of theatrical interpretation. The case of the 'Macbeth' illustrates this dependence most remarkably. It would surely have been impossible that one critic after another should have perpetuated so false an interpretation of the great dramatist's meaning as we have shown them to have given, had they not come to the consideration of his text *prepossessed by the perverted stage impressions of their youth.*

P. S.

DECEMBER 21ST, 1846.

We regret to find that, up to this time, no endeavour has been made to revive, on the London stage, the true 'Macbeth' of Shakespeare. On the contrary, the whole mass of corruptions above exposed, is still retained in performance, even by actors and managers assuming high credit with the public as *restorers* of Shakespeare. At the same time, they continue to announce the corrupted play, not very honestly, as "Shakespeare's tragedy," and to be supported by theatrical critics in this manifestly wilful perversion.

The more, however, that we feel it our duty to point out this pertinaciously wholesale violation of Shakespeare's work, the more we owe it to Miss Faucit, to acknowledge distinctly the originality and truth which, in courageous prosecution of her art under all theatrical disadvantages, we find her to have im-

parted to the personation of the heroine. Those lamentable circumstances of our metropolitan stage which, for the last three years, have left our greatest Shakespearian actress without a theatre in which to appear before a London public, compel us to refer to the journals of Paris, Edinburgh, and Dublin; at each of which capitals she has repeatedly performed this character, in her successive engagements during the period in question.*

Their concurrent evidence plainly shews—what our examination of Shakespeare's work, and our observation of the actress, led us to anticipate,—that her possession of that *essentially feminine* person which we have seen Mrs. Siddons herself contending for as Shakespeare's own idea of Lady Macbeth,—together with that energy of intellect and of will, which this personation equally demands,—have enabled her to interpret the character with a convincing truth of nature and of feeling, more awfully thrilling than the imposing but less natural, and therefore less impressive grandeur of Mrs. Siddons's representation. Her performance, in short, would seem to have exhibited to her audience—not the "fiend" that Mrs. Siddons presented to her most ardent admirers—but the far more interesting picture of a naturally generous woman, depraved by her very self-devotion to the ambitious purpose of a merely selfish man.

The best wish, therefore, that we can cherish for the restoration of Shakespeare in this particular piece, is, that Miss Faucit may speedily find, in our metropolis, a stage and a manager equally capable and willing with herself, to return to Shakespeare, to nature, and to everlasting truth.

* See, more particularly, 'The Scotsman,'—and 'The Dublin Evening Mail,' Nov. 4th, 1846, describing Miss Faucit's performance of Lady Macbeth on the preceding Monday, Nov. 2nd,—repeated a few days after. Since then (on Monday, Dec. 14th) she has acted The Lady Constance on the Dublin stage; and a judicious and well-written article has appeared in 'The Freeman's Journal' of Dec. 18th, indicating the points of resemblance and of contrast between this character and that of Lady Macbeth. Regarding the latter, the writer takes occasion to quote from a correspondent whom he designates as "one of the greatest ornaments of Irish literature," and who avows himself to be a cautious and deliberate convert from the Siddonian interpretation of the character. We regret our want of space to give his most interesting account of the new and convincing impressions made upon him by this performance, and especially as to the fearful truth of *remorseful broken-heartedness* displayed in the sleep-walking scene.

V.

CHARACTERS IN 'AS YOU LIKE IT.'

I.—ROSALIND AND ORLANDO, BEFORE THEIR MEETING IN THE FOREST.

[July 13th, 1844.]

THE business of the 'As You Like It,' is chiefly to

> *dally* with the innocence of love,
> Like the old age.

It is especially the play of youthful courtship between two beings of ideal beauty and excellence, in whom the sympathetic part of love predominates over the selfish—affection over passion. No wonder, then, that Shakespeare, so alive to the superior generosity and delicacy of affection in the feminine breast, should have made the heroine of this piece its most conspicuous personage,—to the full and various developement of whose moral qualities, as well as her peculiar personal and intellectual attractions, all else in the drama is subservient or subordinate. On a former occasion,* we have shown that 'Cymbeline' is, in the main, the drama of *Imogen;* and for the like reason, as will appear from our subsequent examination, the 'As You Like It' might not unaptly be called the play of *Rosalind.*

Of all the sweet feminine names compounded from *Rosa,* that of *Rosa-linda* seems to be the most elegant,

* See "Characters in Cymbeline,"—pp. 42 to 108 of this volume.

and therefore most befitting that particular character of ideal beauty which the dramatist here assigns to his imaginary princess. In Shakespeare's time, the Spanish language and literature were ascendant in Europe, and were much more familiarly heard and read about the English court, than in the present day. Few readers may now be aware that *Rosalinda* is, in truth, a Spanish name—the adjective *lindo* or *linda* having no complete synonyme in English, but expressing beauty in the more exalted, combined with the more ordinary sense—meaning, in short, *exquisitely graceful, beautiful, and sweet.* The analogy will at once be seen, which the image of the graceful rose bears to the exquisite spirit of Rosalind, no less than to her buoyant figure in all its blooming charms. Orlando's verses on the subject are not a lover's idealization of some real-life charmer—they but describe the dramatist's own ideal conception. Who that reads them, but could fancy Shakespeare himself speaking, with his forest of Arden, his noble exiles, and his heroine, before him?—

Why should this a desert be?
For it is unpeopled? No;
Tongues I'll hang on every tree,
That shall civil sayings shew:

Some, how brief the life of man
Runs his erring pilgrimage;
That the stretching of a span
Buckles in his sum of age.

Some, of violated vows
'Twixt the souls of friend and friend:
But upon the fairest boughs,
Or at every sentence' end,

Will I *Rosalinda* write;
Teaching all that read, to know,
The quintessence of every sprite
Heaven would in little shew.

Therefore, heaven nature charg'd
That one body should be fill'd
With all graces wide enlarg'd:
Nature presently distill'd

Helen's cheek, but not her heart;
  Cleopatra's majesty;
Atalanta's better part;
  Sad Lucretia's modesty.

Thus Rosalind of many parts
  By heavenly synod was devis'd;
Of many faces, eyes, and hearts,
  To have the touches dearest priz'd.

"Cleopatra's majesty" recalls to us the tallness of figure which the dramatist has made an essential characteristic of this personage—with a view, amongst other things, to that peculiar male disguise which he designed her to assume, and under which he seems to have intended that she should exhibit to us a complete impersonation of the inmost soul, the most ethereal and exquisite spirit of the piece—that blended ideal of the forest and the pastoral life, which lends to this drama so original and peculiar a charm. To her cousin's proposal that, for security in their wanderings, they shall put themselves in mean attire, and discolour their faces, Rosalind replies:—

Were it not better,
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man?
A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
A boar-spear in my hand: and (in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will)
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside;
As many other mannish cowards have,
That do outface it with their semblances.

Two things regarding this passage demand attention from the histrionic student of this part, no less than from the reader or auditor;—first, the true nature of the feelings which prompt the heroine to assume the masculine garb at all; and, secondly, the precise character of the particular disguise which she adopts. The manner in which more than one of her modern representatives on the stage have demeaned themselves under this habit, would justify Shakespeare's Rosalind in saying to them, as she does on one occasion to her friend Celia, "Dost thou think, though I am capa-

risoned like a man, that I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?" No, indeed; it is a precisely opposite cause, her peculiarly feminine apprehensiveness, that stimulates the ready invention which is her predominant intellectual characteristic, to propose the expedient in question. It is not her affectionate and clear-headed cousin, but herself, that starts the timid objection to the going in quest of her banished father—

> Alas, what danger will it be to us,
> Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!
> Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.

Hereupon her friend simply suggests—

> I'll put myself in poor and mean attire,
> And with a kind of umber smirch my face;
> The like do you; so shall we pass along,
> And never stir assailants.

This, however, is merely the negative defence, of rendering themselves unattractive. But the ready wit of Rosalind supplies her with the thought of adding to this means of safety a positive determent, by arraying her tall figure in "a swashing and a martial outside," which would have sat ill upon the low stature of Celia; besides, Rosalind must at once have perceived, that the appearance of a female companion by her side, would make her own disguise the less liable to suspicion.

Mrs. Jameson, amongst others, misled probably by one of those hasty verbal mistakes which have so often been made by expositors of Shakespeare, seems to have been betrayed by Rosalind's allusion immediately after to "*Jove's* own page," into talking of "her *page's* vest," "her *page's* costume," &c. Now, *pages* of the banished duke do appear in the course of the forest scenes, two of whom sing, at Touchstone's request, the lively song introduced in the fifth act; but the accoutrements of a page would ill have supplied that "*martial*" exterior for the sake of whose protection alone Rosalind has any inclination to put herself in masquerade. She is to wear *manly*, not *boyish* habiliments:—

That I did suit me all points like a *man;*
A *gallant curtle-axe* upon my thigh,
A *boar-spear* in my hand.

This is not the page's, nor the shepherd's, but the forester's array, such as was worn by her father and his exiled followers.

So much for the spirit in which the heroine herself assumes this garb—a spirit as devoid of mere feminine vanity, as it is of unfeminine boldness; although the dramatist now permits her, in justly conscious beauty, to name herself after the cupbearer of the gods, in that same strain of fond idealization which makes him combine in her proper feminine aspect, the exquisite feature of a Helen, the noble grace of a Cleopatra, and the buoyant step of an Atalanta:—

I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page,
And therefore look you call me *Ganymede.*

The fitness of this name to the particular character of beauty presented by the disguised heroine as conceived by the poet, is brought home to us in detail by that subsequent description of it, which, like that of her feminine aspect already cited, Shakespeare has made to be breathed out from the lips of love—well knowing that of true perfection, love is the truest as well as the aptest delineator. Of his Phebe, in name and character no less an ideal shepherdess than Rosalind is an ideal princess, it may be said, that we might have been grateful for her creation, even had she been introduced for no other purpose than to give us the enamoured lines which convey so exquisite a portrait of this terrestrial Ganymede:—

'Tis but a peevish boy——yet *he talks well*——
But what care I for words?——yet words do well
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.
It is a pretty youth——not very pretty——
But, sure, he's proud—and yet *his pride becomes him.*
He'll make a proper man. The best thing in him
Is his complexion; and *faster than his tongue*
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.
He is not very tall—yet for his years he's tall;—
His leg is but so so—and yet 'tis well;—

> There was a pretty redness in his lip;
> A little riper and more lusty red
> Than that mix'd in his cheek; 'twas just the difference
> Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask.

We see with what subtlety the poet has laboured this ideal portrait of the tenderly and gracefully lively youth; and truly, a pencil delicate as his own seems requisite to characterize that correspondent blending of the natural graces with the assumed character, which appears in the language and deportment of his heroine throughout her male personation.

Until her first meeting with Orlando in the forest, she no more seeks than Imogen does, to make any display of her masculine part—she simply endures it. In love, as she is, even before assuming it, she may well find it uncongenial. And when first assured that Orlando is in their neighbourhood, all the woman rushes back upon her heart and mind:—"Alas the day! What shall I do with my doublet and hose?" So soon, however, as Orlando comes actually into her presence, her quick apprehension fails not to discover that these same doublet and hose afford her the best facility for ascertaining the point which now engrosses all her solicitude—whether the noble youth on whom she has fixed her affections, loves her as truly in return.

Here, that we may perceive all the *dignity* which the dramatist has maintained in her character throughout its various developement, it becomes indispensable to consider attentively the qualities of heart and intellect, as well as person, which he has unfolded in his youthful hero.

Among the higher male personages of the piece, Orlando bears the most poetical name; while his character, we see, has been studiously compounded, so as to adapt it peculiarly for conceiving a passion highly imaginative, but no less affectionate. We find it summed up in two remarkable passages, on the joint testimony of the two persons of the drama who have known him the most—the man who most hates him,

and the man who most loved him—his elder brother Oliver, and his father's old servant Adam. The evidence of the former, in his soliloquy at the end of the opening scene, is rendered peculiarly emphatic by those preceding words:—"I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than he;"—"Yet," continues Oliver, "he's gentle; never schooled, and yet learned; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved; and, indeed, so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprised." After this, we may well accept as unexaggerated those expressions of the affectionate old man, which bear witness to the like effect:—

> O my gentle master,
> O my sweet master, O you memory
> Of old Sir Rowland! why, what make you here?
> Why are you virtuous? Why do people love you?
> And wherefore are you gentle, strong, and valiant?
> . . . . . .
> Know you not, master, to some kind of men
> Their graces serve them but as enemies?
> No more do yours; your virtues, gentle master,
> Are sanctified and holy traitors to you.
> Oh, what a world is this, when what is comely
> Envenoms him that bears it!

Observe, that in all this, it is the beauty of soul rather than of person that is dwelt upon as attracting every heart—though, "gentle, strong, and valiant," we cannot conceive of the person itself as otherwise than comely and graceful.

Consistently with this idea, we find that it is not mere vulgar admiration of a handsome youth performing a feat of bodily prowess, but an instant sympathy of soul, that thrills the heart of Rosalind on their first meeting. It is remarkable that, in the first instance, while Celia proposes to her cousin that they shall stay and see the wrestling, Rosalind, pained by Le Beau's account of the three young men whom the wrestler has already disabled, shews her

superior sensitiveness, by her indisposition to remain:—"Is there yet another dotes upon rib-breaking? Shall we see this wrestling, cousin?" But her first glance at the young stranger—"Is yonder the man?"—banishes her reluctance; and to her uncle's enquiry, whether her cousin and she are "crept hither to see the wrestling," she promptly answers for them both, "Ay, my liege; so please you give us leave;" and in like manner, she is the first to ask, "Young man, have you challenged Charles the wrestler!" The terms in which he declines the proffered intervention of the ladies to prevent his proceeding to the perilous encounter, are conceived by the dramatist with admirable fitness to deepen and fix the impression which the speaker has already made upon the sensitive and generous heart of Rosalind, by unconsciously touching that strong though tender chord of sympathy, the similarity of their adverse fortunes:—

> I beseech you, punish me not with your hard thoughts; wherein I confess me much guilty, to deny so fair and excellent ladies anything. But let your fair eyes, and gentle wishes, go with me to my trial; wherein if I be foiled, there is but one shamed that was never gracious; if killed, but one dead that is willing to be so. I shall do my friends no wrong, for I have none to lament me; the world no injury, for in it I have nothing; only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better supplied when I have made it empty.

This modestly plaintive apology, when delivered in the pathetic melody of tone appropriate to the character, fully prepares us for the heroine's expressions of tremulous interest in his success, and for that silently fluttering exultation for his victory which it is left for the genius of the actress to supply. Then, to complete the conquest of this new passion over the heart of Rosalind, by a yet more intimate bond of compassionate sympathy, there come at once Orlando's disclosure of his parentage as the son of her father's bosom friend, and her usurping uncle's ungenerous treatment of him on that very account. She naturally exclaims—

My father lov'd Sir Rowland as his soul,
And all the world was of my father's mind:
Had I before known this young man *his* son,
I should have given him tears unto entreaties,
Ere he should thus have ventur'd.

It is not, however, until her cousin has first addressed him—"Sir, you have well deserv'd," &c., that Rosalind gives him the chain from her neck, saying—

Gentleman,
Wear this for me; one out of suits with fortune;
That could give more, but that her hand lacks means.——
Shall we go, coz?

. . . . . .

He calls us back. My pride fell with my fortunes.
I'll ask him what he would. Did you call, sir?
Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies.

On the other hand, the look and accents of the lovely wearer in giving the chain, seem at once to have taken full possession of Orlando's heart—

Can I not say, I thank you, &c.

And when the two princesses have left him alone—

What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?
I cannot speak to her, yet she urg'd conference:
O poor Orlando! thou art overthrown:
Or Charles, or something weaker, masters thee!

And immediately, to fix the hold of this new passion on his sympathetic nature, and complete, in the auditor's contemplation, the bond of reciprocal affection between the generous-hearted lovers, comes in Le Beau, to tell Orlando, at once, of the usurping duke's malevolence against him,—of his daughter Celia's more than sisterly affection for her cousin Rosalind,—and finally,

that of late this duke
Hath ta'en displeasure 'gainst his gentle niece;
Grounded upon no other argument,
But that the people praise her for her virtues,
And pity her for her good father's sake;
And, on my life, his malice 'gainst the lady
Will suddenly break forth.

This announcement, we say, strikes a deeper chord of sympathy in Orlando's breast, which vibrates in those concluding words of the scene—

> Thus must I from the smoke into the smother;
> From tyrant duke, unto a tyrant brother.——
> But heavenly Rosalind!

Again, how delightfully do we find our progressive interest in the heroine, as a being to be transcendently loved as well as admired, enhanced in the course of that exquisite scene wherein her uncle pronounces her banishment! There is her nobly spirited repelling of the imputation upon herself and her father—

> Yet your mistrust cannot make me a traitor, &c.

Then, her cousin's warm-hearted defence of her—

> If she be a traitor,—
> Why, so am I, &c.

Next, her uncle's own admission—

> Her smoothness,
> Her very silence, and her patience,
> Speak to the people, and they pity her.

And lastly, that delicious climax of evidence as to her resistless power of attracting devoted affection, in the charming altercation which follows between her and Celia:—

> *Cel.* O my poor Rosalind! whither wilt thou go?
> Wilt thou change fathers? I will give thee mine.
> I charge thee, be not thou more griev'd than I am.
> *Ros.* I have more cause.
> *Cel.* Thou hast not, cousin;
> Pr'ythee, be cheerful: knowst thou not, the duke
> Hath banish'd me his daughter?
> *Ros.* That he hath not.
> *Cel.* No? hath not? Rosalind lacks, then, the love
> Which teacheth me that thou and I am one.
> Shall we be sunder'd? shall we part, sweet girl?
> No; let my father seek another heir.
> Therefore devise with me, how we may fly,
> Whither to go, and what to bear with us:
> And do not seek to take your charge upon you,
> To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out;
> For, by this heaven, now at our sorrows pale,
> Say what thou canst, I'll go along with thee!

Not less beautifully touching is that parallel demonstration of a most loving and loveable nature in his hero, which the poet has given us in that devoted attachment of the old servant Adam to his youthful master, and its requital by the latter, which Shakespeare seems to have delineated even with peculiar fondness. We get in love, indeed, with Orlando from the very opening of the piece; for, though he so justly feels himself aggrieved by his elder brother, there is nothing revengeful in his resentment; it is but the uprising of a generous and benevolent spirit against an envious and unnatural oppression, which "mines his gentility with his education." The first words of concession from his brother, after the angry altercation between them, are ungracious enough:—"Well, sir, get you in: I will not long be troubled with you; you shall have some part of your will: I pray you, leave me." Yet these draw from him the pacific reply—"I will no further offend you than becomes me for my good."

But it is his tender gratitude for the old man's devoted fidelity, that most strongly prepossesses us in Orlando's favour. How affectingly is this displayed in the scenes where, during their first wanderings, he is seeking food to save his good old follower from perishing of hunger! In order to perceive the full dramatic force and beauty of the scene where he rushes in, with drawn sword, upon the banished duke and his followers while seated at table, we should bear in mind the determination he had expressed to Adam, when the latter was counselling him to avoid his brother's house on account of his murderous intentions, that no extremity should make him,

> with a base and boisterous sword, enforce
> A thievish living on the common road.

But now, one sole idea engrosses him—that a moment's delay in bringing him nourishment may be death to his venerable servant. It is the *instant* necessity of saving the life of the being upon earth who has shown him most affection, that can alone impel him to do

the violence to his nature, which this menacing action implies. He takes the forcible, simply as being the directest and the quickest means. Yet the duke's address to him—

> Art thou thus bolden'd, man, by thy distress;
> Or else a rude despiser of good manners,
> That in civility thou seem'st so empty?—

so keenly touches his gentlemanly consciousness, as to extort from him the reply:—

> You touch'd my vein at first; the thorny point
> Of bare distress hath ta'en from me the show
> Of smooth civility: yet am I inland-bred,
> And know some nurture.

But here the urgency of the occasion rushes back upon his mind, and makes him instantly repeat his menace,—

> But forbear, I say;
> He dies, that touches any of this fruit,
> Till I and my affairs are answered.

To the duke's enquiry and assurance—

> What would you have? Your gentleness shall force,
> More than your force move us to gentleness,—

he answers,

> I almost die for food, and let me have it.

But it is not his own famishing, it is that of poor old Adam, that he is all the while thinking of. And here let us point out, since the matter is liable to hasty misconception, the dramatic propriety no less than the poetic beauty of the answer to the duke's immediate invitation,

> Sit down and feed, and welcome to our table.

Orlando's eagerness to relieve the pressing necessity of his aged servant, would not have permitted him to waste his time on even the most eloquent appeal to the feelings of his stranger host and his companions, but that he now feels "gentleness" to be his most effective weapon for securing from these men, with whom he is so newly acquainted, the means of relief to the subject of his solicitude. Here, therefore, the speaker is making the best use of his time, even for

that immediate purpose; while the passage itself, so touchingly expressing his own sense of the sweets of social life, as contrasted with that of the wilderness to which he is yet uninured, is one of those most intimately disclosing that genial nature which Shakespeare has so studiously developed in this character:—

> Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you:
> I thought that all things had been savage here;
> And therefore put I on the countenance
> Of stern commandment. But whate'er you are,
> That in this desert inaccessible,
> Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
> Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time;
> If ever you have look'd on better days;
> If ever been where bells have knoll'd to church;
> If ever sat at any good man's feast;
> If ever from your eye-lids wip'd a tear,
> And know what 'tis to pity, and be pitied;
> Let gentleness my strong enforcement be:
> In the which hope, I blush, and hide my sword.

Yet, after the duke (still unknown to our hero) has fully responded to the kindliness of this address, Orlando's apprehensiveness as to the security of his main object, is still tremblingly alive:—

> Then, but forbear your food a little while,
> Whiles, like a doe, I go to find my fawn,
> And give it food. There is an old poor man
> Who after me hath many a weary step
> Limp'd in pure love: till he be first sufficed,—
> Oppress'd with two weak evils, age and hunger,—
> I will not touch a bit.

The mutual disclosure of name and station which follows, between him and the duke, terminates this phasis of the hero's fortune:—

> If that you were the good Sir Rowland's son,
> As you have whisper'd faithfully you were,
> And as mine eye doth his effigies witness
> Most truly limn'd and living in your face,
> Be truly welcome hither. I am the duke
> That lov'd your father. The residue of your fortune,
> Go to my cave and tell me.

Orlando has now been conducted through those trials which the dramatist has employed to disclose

the inherent qualities of his character, as well as to interest us in his fate; and is arrived at that state of sylvan quiet where, having nothing to do but "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world," he naturally surrenders himself to his new-born passion for the "heavenly Rosalind." The new developement of both characters, but especially that of the heroine, in the course of the very originally imagined courtship which ensues between the lover and his disguised mistress, must form the subject of another paper. This is one of those among Shakespeare's more subtle and delicate delineations, respecting which great misconception has existed. We shall therefore take some pains, by a diligent exposition of the matter, to cause more justice to be rendered to those noble and tender graces in the spirit of his Rosalind, to the unfolding and enhancing of which, he has made her gayest sprightliness purely subservient.

2.—ROSALIND AND ORLANDO, IN THE FOREST OF ARDEN.

[July 20th, 1844.]

THE life which the banished duke and his companions are leading in the Forest of Arden, may be properly regarded as an idealization of the outlawed forest life of the Middle Ages in general, and of England especially. This must appear to any one who shall well consider the answer which, in the opening scene of this play, the usurping duke's wrestler, Charles, makes to Oliver de Bois's enquiry, "Where will the old duke live?"—

> They say, he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say, many young gentlemen flock to him

every day; and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.

The exiled prince and his followers, indeed, like Robin Hood and his band, are victims of an unjust political revolution: but it has pleased the poet to exclude from his dramatic picture all the vindictive and predatory features which usually, and almost necessarily, marked the sylvan life of men so proscribed, how just soever the cause in which they suffered. He has chosen to exhibit to us only its humaner aspect—its careless, its contemplative, and its benevolent characteristics; and, above all, to charm us with a richly-wrought painting of

> true, inseparable, faithful loves,
> Sticking together in calamity.

Among the prominent figures of the woodland piece, Amiens, with his greenwood carols, represents the careless, light-hearted spirit of the true forester in general: in the cheerful duke and the melancholy Jaques we find the men of somewhat advanced age, of experience and reflection: while Orlando himself personifies the leading spirit of the drama—the spirit of youth, and hope, and love.

On the other hand, the properly pastoral scenes and personages "dwell in the skirts of the forest," as Rosalind says, "like fringe upon a petticoat." Mark, also, the gradations even here. William and Audrey, with their goatherd occupation, represent the class of merest, rudest rustics. "The gods" (that is, the poet) "have made them" purely prosaic, that they may serve as the better foil to those shepherd characters whom he has poetically endowed. The old shepherd, Corin, let us observe—as his name would indicate—though he necessarily becomes prosaic in colloquy with that very matter-of-fact though "swift and sententious" personage, Touchstone, belongs properly, as we see in his scenes with Sylvius and with Rosalind, to the ideal portion of the characters. And lastly, Sylvius and Phebe themselves embody the most natural and

delicate among the imaginative graces of the purely pastoral drama.

Celia, we find, assumes the pastoral garb on taking possession of

> the cottage and the bounds
> That the old Carlot late was master of.

But Rosalind retains the forester's habiliments, for the same reasons which had induced her to assume them. And this it is that enables her to address Orlando, on their first sylvan meeting, as a sort of brother-woodsman.

Before considering the dialogue which ensues between them, it is necessary to glance at the previous course of the heroine's feelings as exhibited by the dramatist.

In the scene between the cousins which immediately follows that of the wrestling, it will be remembered that the sorrow for her father's exile, which, in the opening of the piece, had engrossed the heart of Rosalind, is clearly shown to be supplanted as her predominant feeling by her "liking for old Sir Rowland's youngest son." The absorbing nature of this new-sprung passion appears again, in the very first words that she utters after she finds herself in safety from the threatened violence of her tyrannic uncle. "O Jupiter! how weary are my spirits!" is her exclamation on her first appearance in the forest, while Celia and Touchstone are complaining of mere bodily exhaustion. And then, in spite of her fatigue, she is all attention to the dialogue between Corin and Sylvius:—

> Alas, poor shepherd, searching of thy wound,
> I have by hard adventure found mine own.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Jove! Jove! this shepherd's passion
> Is much upon my fashion!

Their finding of the verses in her praise hung and carved upon the trees, and Celia's discovering of Orlando himself as their author, still wearing Rosalind's chain upon his neck, give a new impulse and

vivacity to her feelings. Orlando's verses, too, we find, sustain the character given him by his elder brother, as one "never schooled, and yet learned; full of noble device;" and are peculiarly fitted to nourish the growing affection in the bosom of Rosalind—inspired, as she feels them to be, above all things, by a keen sense, in the writer, of the bright and tender grace and purity of soul which so exquisitely illumine her personal attractions. It is under the immediate impression of this delicate homage, that she overhears him, with her chain still upon his neck, avow and justify his passion to "the melancholy Jaques," and is thus encouraged to avail herself of her forester's disguise, to come forward and seek, in her own person, to draw from his lips a confirmation of the pleasing avowal.

From the very outset she turns the dialogue in that direction. When, in answer to her first question, he answers, "There's no clock in the forest," she replies immediately, "Then there is no true lover in the forest; else, sighing every minute, and groaning every hour, would detect the lazy foot of time, as well as a clock:" and to his rejoinder, "And why not the swift foot of time?" with what admirable readiness does she proceed to engage and fascinate his attention by her lively description of how "Time travels in divers paces with divers persons."

It should here be observed, that Orlando, in the first instance, suspects the seeming youth to be a brother of his mistress. When the duke afterwards observes to him,

> I do remember in this shepherd boy
> Some lively touches of my daughter's favour,

he answers,

> My lord, the first time that I ever saw him,
> Methought he was a brother to your daughter.

This shews us the drift of those questions of his which continue his first conversation with the disguised Rosalind from the point to which we have already

traced it:—"Where dwell you, pretty youth?—Are you a native of this place?—Your accent is something finer than you could purchase in so removed a dwelling." How dexterously is her answer contrived, so as to make her very evasion of his enquiry lead Orlando directly to the subject of which her heart is full:—

I have been told so of many: but, indeed, an old religious uncle of mine taught me to speak, who was in his youth an inland man; one that knew courtship too well, for there he fell in love. I have heard him read many lectures against it; and I thank God I am not a woman, to be touched with so many giddy offences as he hath generally taxed their whole sex withal.

With equal readiness she converts the request, "I pr'ythee, recount some of them," into an instrument for drawing the desired confession from the lips of her lover:—

No; I will not cast away my physic but on those that are sick. There *is* a man haunts the forest, that abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns, and elegies on brambles; all, forsooth, deifying the name of Rosalind: if I could meet with *that* fancy-monger, I would give *him* some good counsel, for *he* seems to have the quotidian of love upon him.

This at once brings Orlando to the point:—"I am he that is so love-shaked. I pray you, tell me your remedy." And then, who does not see the pleasure with which, under her affected disbelief, she dwells on the contrast which Orlando's neatness of personal appearance presents to that of the more ordinary but less healthy kind of lover, "about whom everything demonstrates a careless desolation." "But you are no such man," she continues, "you are rather point-device in your accoutrements, as loving yourself, than seeming the lover of any other." But her answer to the assurance which Orlando returns, reveals to us sufficiently how little she is inclined to doubt the interesting fact:—

Me believe it? You may as soon make her that you love believe it; which, I warrant, she is apter to do than to confess does: that is one of the points in the which women still give to their consciences.

She is never tired, however, of hearing Orlando repeat his protestation:—

But, in good sooth, are you he that hangs the verses on the trees, wherein Rosalind is so admired?

Orl. I swear to thee, youth, by the white hand of Rosalind, I am that he, that unfortunate he.

Ros. But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?

Orlando's answer, "Neither rhyme nor reason can express how much," suggests to her the expedient for continuing the intercourse which she finds so delightful:—

Love is merely a madness; and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip, as madmen do: and the reason why they are not so punished and cured, is, that the lunacy is so ordinary, that the whippers are in love too. Yet I profess curing it by counsel.

Orlando may well enquire doubtingly, "Did you ever cure any so?" Her answer shews us one of those subtle devices by which Shakespeare so well knew how to exalt the ideal perfection of a favourite heroine. The exquisite characterization which she gives us of feminine caprice in the weaker portion of her sex, most beautifully sets off that contrary disposition by which her every sentence makes us feel that she herself is animated:—

Yes, one, (she replies,) and in this manner. He was to imagine me his love, his mistress; and I set him every day to woo me. At which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing, and liking; proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something, and for no passion truly anything, as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this colour: would now like him, now loath him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor from his mad humour of love, to a living humour of madness; which was, to forswear the full stream of the world, and to live in a nook merely monastic. And thus I cured him; and this way will I take upon me to wash your liver as clean as a sound sheep's heart, that there shall not be one spot of love in it.

Orl. I would not be cured, youth.

Ros. I would cure you, if you would but call me Rosalind, and come every day to my cote, and woo me.

Orl. Now, by the faith of my love, I will; tell me where it is.
Ros. Go with me to it, and I'll shew it you; and by the way you shall tell me where in the forest you live. Will you go?
Orl. With all my heart, good youth.
Ros. Nay, you must call me *Rosalind.*—Come, sister, will you go?

To understand thoroughly the spirit of this scene, especially of its concluding portion, we must bear in mind that Orlando cannot be supposed to lose sight for a moment of the resemblance in feature and in voice which the supposed forest youth bears to his noble and graceful mistress. Nor does he any more wish for his own cure than Rosalind herself desires it. On the contrary, it is because he feels the lively and delicate charm which he finds in this new acquaintance, operating, by strong affinity, to nourish and deepen the impression which his real mistress's perfections have made upon his heart, that he at last accepts the sportive invitation to visit the cottage of the fictitious Ganymede. On the other hand, Rosalind has secured to herself the pleasure of hearing under her disguise the continued addresses of her lover; while the fact of her remaining undiscovered is brought within the limits of probability by the exceeding unlikelihood to Orlando's mind of such a metamorphosis on the part of his princess, and yet more by the perfect self-possession and finished address wherewith both she and her cousin are enacting their forest and pastoral parts, as if they were native to the scene, to borrow Rosalind's expression, "as the coney that you see dwell where she is kindled."

But above all, she is talking herself more deeply into love. How beautifully does this appear in her subsequent conversation with Celia, when Orlando has failed to keep his wooing appointment:—"Never talk to me, I will weep," &c.—and in her account of how she had avoided recognition by her father, although she and her cousin had set out upon their wanderings on purpose to seek him:—

I met the duke yesterday, and had much question with him. He asked me of what parentage I was? I told him, of as good

as he; so he laughed, and let me go.——But what talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando!

The next scene between the lovers, that of the mock courtship and marriage, is that which makes the highest demands upon the intelligence of the auditor and the powers of the actress; for here the genius of the heroine is more subtly active and more decidedly ascendant than ever. Indeed, she is here more than ever in earnest,—her object being, to bring her lover, even under this sportive guise, to an actual offer of marriage—to put, in short, the sincerity of his affection and the seriousness of his intentions fairly to the test:—

Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour, and like enough to consent, &c.

Again:—

Am not I your Rosalind?

Orl. I take some joy to say you are, because I would be talking of her.

Ros. Well, in her person, I say—I will not have you.

Orl. Then, in mine own person, I die.

In her answer, we find her delight in believing this protestation of Orlando's, disguised under and enhanced by the assertion which she makes of the general levity of men in love:—

No, 'faith, die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, *videlicet*, in a love cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before; and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have lived many a fair year, though Hero had turned nun, if it had not been for a hot midsummer night; for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont, and, being taken with the cramp, was drowned; and the foolish chroniclers of that age found it was—Hero of Sestos. But these are all lies: men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

But what she really thinks of the matter in her lover's case, appears abundantly in the colloquy that ensues:—

But come; now I will be your Rosalind in a more coming-on disposition; and ask me what you will, I will grant it.

Orl. Then love me, Rosalind.

Ros. Yes,—faith, will I, Fridays and Saturdays and all.

Orl. And wilt thou have me?

Ros. Ay, and twenty such.

Orl. What sayst thou?

Ros. Are you not good?

Orl. I hope so.

Ros. Why then, can one desire too much of a good thing?—Come, sister, you shall be the priest, and marry us.—Give me your hand, Orlando. What do you say, sister?

Orl. Pr'ythee, marry us.

Cel. I cannot say the words.

Ros. You must begin, *Will you, Orlando,*—

Cel. Go to.—Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind?

Orl. I will.

Ros. Ay, but when?

Orl. Why now, as fast as she can marry us.

Ros. Then, you must say, *I take thee, Rosalind, for wife.*

Orl. I take thee, Rosalind, for wife.

Ros. I might ask you for your commission: but I do take thee, Orlando, for my husband. There's a girl goes before the priest; and, certainly, a woman's thought runs before her actions.

Orl. So do all thoughts; they are winged.

Feeling now still further assured on the point which forms the subject of her fondest and most earnest solicitude, Rosalind's heart is at leisure to gratify itself with another of those conscious contrasts between the imputed capriciousness of her sex and the steady affectionateness of her own character. We have heard already her description of feminine weakness and perverseness as exhibited in the season of courtship: she now gives us a still more lively one of the same failings as they shew themselves after marriage:—

Now tell me, how long you would have her, after you have possessed her.

Orl. For ever and a day.

Ros. Say a day, without the ever. No, no, Orlando, men are April when they woo, December when they wed; maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen; more clamorous than a parrot against rain; more new-fangled than an ape; more giddy in my desires than a monkey: I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain,

and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry; I will laugh like a hyen, and that when thou art inclined to sleep.

Orl. But will my Rosalind do so?

Ros. By my life, she will do as I do.

Orl. Oh, but she is wise.

Ros. Or else she could not have the wit to do this; the wiser the waywarder. Make the doors upon a woman's wit, and it will out at the casement; shut that, and 'twill out at the key-hole; stop that, 'twill fly, with the smoke, out at the chimney.

Orl. A man that had a wife with such a wit, he might say,—*Wit, whither wilt?*

Ros. Nay, you might keep that check for it, till you met your wife's wit going to your neighbour's bed.

Orl. And what wit could wit have to excuse that?

Ros. Marry, to say,—she came to seek you there. You shall never take her without her answer, unless you take her without her tongue. Oh, that woman that cannot make her fault her husband's occasion, let her never nurse her child herself, for she will breed it like a fool.

How deliciously, after all this *acted* levity and mischievousness, comes immediately the fond exclamation, in answer to Orlando's announcement that for two hours he must absent himself—"Alas, dear love, I cannot lack thee two hours!" Then, again, that exquisite little imitation of true feminine apprehensiveness:—

Ay, go your ways, go your ways:—I knew what you would prove; my friends told me as much, and I thought no less:—that flattering tongue of yours won me:—'tis but one cast away, and so,—come, death!

And finally, that subtlest blending of the real with the assumed female character and feelings, which we find in the pretty parting admonition:—

By my troth, and in good earnest, and so God mend me, and by all pretty oaths that are not dangerous,—if you break one jot of your promise, or come one minute behind your hour, I will think you the most pathetical break-promise, and the most hollow lover, and the most unworthy of her you call Rosalind, that may be chosen out of the gross band of the unfaithful: therefore, beware my censure, and keep your promise.

When Orlando has departed, Celia would fain expostulate with her friend—"You have simply

misus'd our sex in your love-prate," &c. But Rosalind's heart is much too full to entertain the topic; and her feelings gush forth uncontrollably, in fond and delighted impatience:—

O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathoms deep I am in love! But it cannot be sounded; my affection hath an unknown bottom, like the bay of Portugal.

Cel. Or, rather, bottomless; that as fast as you pour affection in, it runs out.

Ros. No—that same wicked bastard of Venus, that was begot of thought, conceived of spleen, and born of madness—that blind rascally boy, that abuses every one's eyes because his own are out—let him be judge, how deep I am in love;—I'll tell thee, Aliena, I cannot be out of sight of Orlando: I'll go find a shadow, and sigh till he come!

This last paragraph is omitted in the "acting play," though so necessary to mark the progress of the dominant passion in the breast of the heroine, and to give full import and effect to that following scene, wherein the unknown elder brother Oliver, to excuse Orlando's absence at the hour appointed for his return, relates the generous and heroic adventure in which he has been wounded. How finely is this latter scene contrived, so as to shew us the dignity of Rosalind's affection ever keeping pace with its increasing warmth. Her first solicitude, on this occasion, is not about her lover's personal safety, but as to the worthiness of his conduct under this new and extraordinary trial of his generosity. In reply to Celia's observation—

Oh, I have heard him speak of that same brother;
And he did render him the most unnatural
That liv'd 'mongst men,—

Oliver confirms this belief in herself and her cousin by saying,

And well he might so do,
For well I know he was unnatural.

But this reflection prevents not Rosalind in the least from pressing the enquiry—

But to Orlando—Did he leave him there,
Food to the suck'd and hungry lioness?

With what intense anxiety must we suppose her listening to every syllable of the stranger's answer:—

Twice did he turn his back, and purpos'd so;
But kindness, nobler ever than revenge,
And nature, stronger than his just occasion,
Made him give battle to the lioness,
Who quickly fell before him; in which hurtling,
From miserable slumber I awak'd.

And now her heart is at full leisure, with yet more tender, sympathetic, and admiring interest than ever, to satisfy itself regarding Orlando's personal safety:—

Ros. But, for the bloody napkin——
Oliver. By and by,
When from the first to last, betwixt us two,
Tears our recountments had most kindly bath'd,
As, how I came into that desert place——
In brief, he led me to the gentle duke,
Who gave me fresh array and entertainment,
Committing me unto my brother's love;
Who led me instantly unto his cave,
There stripp'd himself, and here upon his arm
The lioness had torn some flesh away,
Which all this while had bled; and now he fainted,
And cry'd, in fainting, upon Rosalind.
Brief, I recover'd him, bound up his wound;
And, after some small space, being strong at heart,
He sent me hither, stranger as I am,
To tell this story, that you might excuse
His broken promise,—and to give this napkin,
Dy'd in this blood, unto the shepherd youth
That he in sport doth call his Rosalind.

Nothing but the most delicate and judicious acting can illustrate the exquisite beauty of the short fainting scene which follows, and shews us the climax of the blended passion and affection in the bosom of Rosalind. After this, we are quite prepared for the manner in which she meets Orlando's desponding reflection, suggested by his brother's approaching nuptials with the supposed Aliena:—

But oh, how bitter a thing it is, to look into happiness through another man's eyes! By so much the more shall I to-

morrow be at the height of heart-heaviness, by how much I shall think my brother happy in having what he wishes for.

Ros. Why then, to-morrow I cannot serve your turn for Rosalind?

Orl. I can live no longer by thinking.

Ros. I will weary you, then, no longer with idle talking.

Now we have another of those exquisite passages which no masculine hand but Shakespeare's could ever pen, and which so charmingly betray to the auditor the delicate woman under her masculine garb. It is pretty to contrast the rapid, pointed volubility of our heroine, so long as Orlando's courtship is carried on in seeming jest, with the circumlocutory manner in which, speaking now, as she says, "to some purpose," she announces to him that he shall so soon be married to Rosalind if he will:—"Know of me, then, that I know you are a gentleman of good conceit: I speak not this that you should bear a good opinion of my knowledge, inasmuch I say, I know you are," &c. Every female reader, and especially every female auditor, if the actress's own instinct lead her aright, will well understand this delicately rendered coyness of the speaker in approaching seriously so decisive a declaration to her lover, even under the mask of her fictitious personation.

Her practical sagacity, however, her apt and prompt invention, are but stimulated the more by this new and trying occasion. She devises the mode of gracefully quitting her masculine guise as readily as she had contrived to make it the means of testing her lover's affection. And, let every actress well observe, she shews us that she is no less gratified by having finally dismissed her doublet and hose, than she was reconciled to them while they favoured her enquiry into the fact of all most interesting to her heart. With exquisite propriety, also, we now find the assumed loquacity of the forest youth reduced, in her own person as the betrothed wife, to the fewest words possible by which she can resign herself to her father and her chosen husband. To her father—

To you I give myself, for I am yours;—

To her lover—

To you I give myself, for I am yours.

Again, to the duke—

I'll have no father, if you be not he;—

To Orlando—

I'll have no husband, if you be not he;—

And to Phebe—

Nor ne'er wed woman, if you be not she.

Such are the last words from Rosalind's own lips. But her poetical and even dramatic invention still presides over the scene, in that separate character of Hymen; the garb, the action, and the words of which we must necessarily suppose to be of her own device, even to that concluding "wedlock hymn" which commemorates the principal one of the matters that form the main subject of this drama—the grand comprehensive moral of which is, the eternal triumph of the genial sympathies and the social relations over every form of individual selfishness and misanthropy.

No reader who shall have traced, with us, the course of Rosalind's feelings and deportment, through that first period of her fortunes when her heart is engrossed by sorrow for her father's banishment, and that second period when solicitude for her lover's requital of her affection, for his honour and his safety, fills her whole soul, and prompts her every sentence,—will need any further indication on our part, to shew him how foreign to the anxiously active state of our heroine's heart and mind throughout, is Mrs. Jameson's notion, for instance, about her "fleeting the time carelessly," "dancing on the greensward, and frolicking among green leaves"—a notion which at once brings down the "heavenly Rosalind" of Shakespeare's fancy and Orlando's love, to the level of a "Maid Marian," or, at most, a superior May-day queen.

The same imperfect view of the character causes this critic to speak in terms comparatively slighting of

the intellectual developement in Rosalind. She tells us:—"Rosalind has not the impressive eloquence of Portia, nor the sweet wisdom of Isabella. Her longest speeches are not her best," &c. But the dramatist has placed her in no circumstances that at all admit, much less demand from her, anything of that solemn declamation which we hear from Isabella and from Portia. Any such declamatory strain, so out of place, from her lips to any of the individuals with whom she is brought into contact, would have testified, not in favour of the strength and brightness of her intellect, but against them.

Neither is Rosalind any more inherently loquacious than she is declamatory: she *never* talks merely for talking's sake: strong feeling or earnest purpose dictates her every syllable. How this appears in all that relates immediately to her own interests and feelings, we have shown at large; but it seems requisite that, in a following paper, we should point attention to the unvarying consistency with which she is made to display the like ready sagacity, as well as abstract wisdom, in her intercourse with those personages in the drama of whom her own fortunes are entirely independent. It is important to shew, that even in the character of a moralist, Shakespeare has studiously given the ascendancy to her brightly glowing humanity, over the misanthropic melancholy of a Jaques, no less than over the cynical jocularity of a Touchstone.

We shall also find it indispensable to complete the chain of argument in vindication of this nobly ideal Shakespearian character from critical perversion, by shewing how evidently in this instance, as in so many others, the critics have allowed their judgment respecting Shakespeare's conception, as laid before us in his uncorrupted page, to be warped by early and habitual impressions imbibed from the traditional notions that have been current on the actual stage.

3.—ROSALIND WITH PHEBE, AND WITH JAQUES.

[July 27th, 1844.]

The love affair between Phebe and Silvius contrasts beautifully with that between Orlando and Rosalind. The young shepherd's passionate devotion to "the proud disdainful shepherdess" yet unexperienced in

> the wounds invisible
> That love's keen arrows make,

presents a charming foil to that mutual passion and affection in the two leading personages of the piece, which we find so constant and progressive from the moment of their first interview. It is also the principal means of developing that healthy proportion with which the poet has so exquisitely endowed this heroine's character, between the play of the feelings and the activity of the intellect. She is not love-*sick* and languishing; she is love-*inspired*, to more active benevolence and more happy invention. Thus, upon the old shepherd's intimation to her and Celia—

> If you will see a pageant truly play'd
> Between the pale complexion of true love
> And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain,
> Go hence a little, and I shall conduct you,
> If you will mark it,—

she eagerly replies—

> Oh come, let us remove;
> The sight of lovers feedeth those in love:—
> Bring us unto this sight, and you shall say,
> I'll prove a busy actor in their play.

So, indeed, she proves. In the scene that follows, to borrow one of her own subsequent expressions, she "speaks to some purpose." We can hardly, therefore, agree with Mrs. Jameson, that, in the dialogue in question, Phebe is "more in earnest" than her

monitress. It is not, however, the wholesome lecture which she reads the scornful beauty, that begins to bring her to reason; but the impression which her look and accent make upon her in the assumed person of Ganymede, as described in that celebrated passage from Phebe's own lips, which we have cited in the first of these papers. Among those lines, how admirably expressive of that essential tenderness which Shakespeare has so constantly combined, in this character, with even the keenest flashes of wit and intellect—that fear of wounding, even in reproof —is Phebe's remark—

> And faster than his tongue
> Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.

In the subsequent scene where she reads the letter addressed to her as Ganymede by the shepherdess, her prompt and apt inventiveness is yet more conspicuous, in the means which she devises to increase the disabusing effect of the communication which she makes to Silvius of Phebe's treacherous offer, by first describing it to him, in exaggerated terms, as a letter of scornful defiance,—though her counsel to the shepherd, not to "love such a woman," is as much thrown away upon the man whom, as she says, "love hath made a tame snake," as her exhortation to requital of his love had been upon the shepherdess herself.

It is remarkable, that the dramatist seems to have studiously heightened the effect of these passages exhibiting the intellectual ascendancy of his heroine, by the juxtaposition in which he has placed them with others which peculiarly unfold her lively tenderness of feeling. The former scene comes upon her at the moment when she is impatiently expecting Orlando's fulfilment of his first wooing appointment: the latter, in like manner, comes just when she is anxiously awaiting him the second time, his hour being already expired; and is followed immediately by the agitating narrative which produces the fainting scene spoken of in our last paper.

Let us here observe the art with which, after so inauspicious an opening of their courtship, a happy union is brought about between the shepherd and shepherdess without violating probability. First, the instant fulfilment of her lover's prediction—

> O dear Phebe,
> If ever (as that ever may be near)
> You meet in some fresh cheek the power of fancy,
> Then shall you know the wounds invisible
> That love's keen arrows make.

Then, her first sympathetic relenting—

> Silvius, the time was, that I hated thee;
> And yet it is not, that I bear thee love;
> But since that thou canst talk of love so well,
> Thy company, which erst was irksome to me,
> I will endure, &c.

Next, her wooing Ganymede by the very lips of Silvius himself:—

> Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis, to love.
> *Sil.* It is, to be all made of sighs and tears;—
> It is, to be all made of faith and service;—
> It is, to be all made of fantasy,
> All made of passion, and all made of wishes;
> All adoration, duty, and obeisance,—
> All humbleness, all patience, and impatience,—
> All purity, all trial, all observance;—
> And so am I for Phebe.

Thus, the very eloquence which she borrows to plead her own passion, is made to appeal to her awakened feelings more impressively than ever on her lover's behalf. So that when, at last, the flow of those feelings in their original channel is suddenly and hopelessly stopped by the discovery of the real sex of the seeming youth, we can well believe the disappointed shepherdess where, turning to her constant adorer, she says in conclusion—

> Thy faith my fancy to thee doth combine.

Over all this, however, the beneficently inventive genius of Rosalind presides. But it is the contact into which she is brought with the great misanthrope

of the piece, that most eminently draws forth that sound moral wisdom with which the poet has endowed her. They who have speculated upon the question, how far the melancholy of Jaques might be supposed to have been identified with Shakespeare's own feelings at the particular period when this play was composed, might have spared themselves much profitless conjecture, had they attended more closely to his conversations—not only with the "motley-minded" cynic of the piece—but with those three several personages in it who so amply and triumphantly proclaim the theory as well as exhibit the practice of genial humanity and active benevolence—the exiled father of Rosalind, her exiled lover, and her exiled self. The rebukes which the duke administers to the self-absorbed and sarcastic ruminations of the sated voluptuary (not excepting the celebrated speech on the "seven ages," which it has been so customary to cite as Shakespeare's own deliberate and impartial view of human life), are summed up in those two remarkable passages, so characteristic of the generous fortitude of the man whose misfortunes have *not* been of his own procuring, as contrasted with the self-engrossed complaining of the man who *has* been the principal artificer of his own misery:—

> Fie on thee! I can tell what thou wouldst do;—
> Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin:
> For thou thyself hast been a libertine,
> As sensual as the brutish sting itself;
> And all the embossed sores and headed evils
> That thou with license of free foot hast caught,
> Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world.

Again:—

> Thou seest, we are not all alone unhappy:
> This wide and universal theatre
> Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
> Wherein we play.

In the like spirit, Orlando answers the proposal of Jaques, that they two shall sit down together and rail against their mistress the world, and all their misery:—

I will chide no breather in the world, but myself; against whom I know most faults.

But it is Rosalind who is made to reprove, in one breath, both the misanthrope and the cynic, immediately after her first scene with Phebe:—

Jaq. I pr'ythee, pretty youth, let me be better acquainted with thee.

Ros. They say, you are a melancholy fellow.

Jaq. I am so; I do love it better than laughing.

Ros. Those that are *in extremity of either*, are abominable fellows; and betray themselves to every modern censure, worse than drunkards.

Then, when Jaques has described his melancholy as resulting from "the sundry contemplation of his travels":—

Ros. A traveller! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear, you have sold your own lands, to see other men's: then, to have seen much, and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

Jaq. Yes, I have gained my experience.

Ros. And your experience makes you sad: I had rather have a fool to make me merry, than experience to make me sad; and to travel for it, too.

And even when Jaques is hurrying away at the approach of Orlando, the dramatist makes her pursue him with that exquisite characterization of the prevalent coxcombries of returned travellers in general:—

Farewell, monsieur traveller. Look you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity; and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola.

Having now carefully traced, on the page of Shakespeare, the poet's own conception of this exquisitely ideal character, up to its highest intellectual developement, it is time to shew succinctly the degradation which it has undergone at the hands of the critics; and how this critical perversion itself has originated, for the most part, in false theatrical interpretation.

4.—CRITICISM AND ACTING OF THE CHARACTER OF ROSALIND.

[July 27th, 1844.]

Mrs. Jameson's account of Shakespeare's Rosalind embodies the least erroneous of the prevalent views respecting this character. It will therefore suffice to shew how much the common estimate sinks below that ideal dignity, as well as beauty, with which we have shewn in detail that the poet has endowed it, if we point out the principal misapprehensions regarding it into which the authoress of the 'Characteristics of Women' has been betrayed.

The fundamental error of the critic in appreciating this noble as well as exquisite creation, seems to result from the mistaken attempt which she makes to classify the characters of which she is treating, as "characters of intellect," "characters of affection," &c. Of all characters in fiction, those of Shakespeare least admit of such classification—their individuality is so inherent and essential—so analogous to that of actual and living persons. We have shown before* how this classifying notion has misled the writer into underrating the intellectual and imaginative qualities of Imogen; and in the present instance we see the same fallacious endeavour causing her to make exactly the reverse mistake, by assigning too small a proportion to affectionate feeling in the character of Rosalind. Mrs. Jameson, indeed, commits too frequently, regarding these Shakespearian personages, the error so often committed in real life, of taking some prominent part of a character for the whole, or, at least, for a much larger portion of it than it actually constitutes. This too constant habit of estimating a given character simply through looking at it from the outside, rather

* See, in this volume, pages 94, 101.

than by penetrating to its inmost spirit, and then, as it were, surveying it from the centre, has been peculiarly fatal to this pleasing writer's criticism of the more ideal among Shakespeare's female characters. It would even appear to have made her overlook altogether the distinction between his ideal women and his women of real life; so much so, that among those which she classes as "characters of intellect," she actually ranks Rosalind—not only after Portia and Isabella—but even after Beatrice:—

"I come now," she begins, "to Rosalind, whom I should have ranked before Beatrice, inasmuch as the greater degree of her sex's softness and sensibility, united with equal wit and intellect, give her the superiority as a woman; but that, as a dramatic character, she is inferior in force. The portrait is one of infinitely more delicacy and variety, but of less strength and depth," &c.

Yet, surely, the spirit of Rosalind is far more ascendant in this delightfully ideal play than that of Beatrice is in the spirited real-life comedy of 'Much Ado about Nothing.' The source of this false notion as to the comparative *slightness* in the character of Rosalind is, however, distinctly traceable in a following sentence of the authoress's critique:—

"Though Rosalind is a princess, she is a princess of Arcady; and notwithstanding the charming effect produced by her first scenes, *we scarcely ever think of her with reference to them, or associate her with a court and the artificial appendages of her rank.*"

But if any reader or spectator scarcely ever thinks of her in the forest scenes with reference to those previous ones, this is assuredly no fault of Shakespeare's; who, as we have shown in the first of these papers, has laboured most carefully to impress his auditors with the true rank, character, and position of his heroine, so as to make it next to impossible for them so far to forget these afterwards as to see in her only—as Mrs. Jameson expresses it—"a princess of Arcady." The critic, however, proceeds on the same false bias:—

"She was not made to 'lord it o'er a fair mansion,' and take state upon her, like the all-accomplished Portia, but to breathe the free air of heaven, and *frolic* among green leaves. She was not made to stand the siege of daring profligacy, and oppose high action and high passion to the assaults of adverse fortune, like Isabel; but to 'fleet the time carelessly, as they did i' the golden age.' She was not made to bandy wit with lords, and tread courtly measures with plumed and warlike cavaliers, like Beatrice; but to *dance* on the greensward, and 'murmur among living brooks a music sweeter than their own.' Though sprightliness is the distinguishing characteristic of Rosalind, as of Beatrice," &c.

She had already told us:—

"'I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry,' is an adjuration which Rosalind needed not when once at liberty, and *sporting* 'under the greenwood tree.'"

Mrs. Jameson, it should seem, has here literally adopted that reading of Rosalind's opening line on her first appearance in the forest, which Mr. Knight, in contradiction, as he tells us, to "all the modern editions," has deliberately inserted in his own 'Pictorial Shakspere'—

O Jupiter! how *merry* are my spirits!—

notwithstanding that Touchstone's reply, "I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary," demands *weary* in the previous line to give it any significance. Mr. Knight, however, in a marginal note, proceeds to support his alteration by an argument which involves a total misconception of the character and the situation: "Whiter," says he, "with great good sense, suggests that Rosalind's merriment was assumed as well as her dress." How, we would ask, does this interpretation agree with her following exclamations on the same occasion:—

Alas, poor shepherd, searching of thy wound,
I have by hard adventure found mine own!

and again—

Jove! Jove! this shepherd's passion
Is much upon my fashion!

The *assumption* in this case consists in supposing that *merriment*, real or assumed, enters at all into the situation or the character. Here, again, the words of Rosalind to her cousin might be addressed to her histrionic representatives and to her critics: "I shew more mirth than I am mistress of, and would you yet that I were merrier?"

It is not, in fact, from the page of Shakespeare, as we have hinted already, that his critics can have drawn any such notion about this personage; but from the traditional ideas, respecting the character and the piece, with which their eyes and ears have been early familiarized upon the modern stage. The fundamental error in the established theatrical treatment of this play, has descended from that *Restoration* period of our dramatic history when, under the ascendancy which the restored court gave to French principles of taste and criticism, it was sought to subject even the great *ideal dramas* of Shakespeare to the commonplace classical circumscriptions of *tragedy* and *comedy*. Here we have a signal example of the perversion which must ever be effected by an endeavour to make the principles of art subordinate to the distinctions of criticism.

This great, unique, ideal play being once definitively set down upon the manager's books as a comedy in the limited sense, it followed of course, according to theatrical reasoning, that the part of its heroine was evermore to be sustained by whatever lady should be regarded, by distinction, as the *comic* actress for the time being. Surely, on this principle alone can it have been (notwithstanding all her genuine comic powers) that either the figure, the spirit, or the manner, of a Mrs. Jordan, for instance, was ever, not merely tolerated, but relished and applauded, in her personation of the "heavenly Rosalind!" But the managers have not stopped here. When the comic actress of this part, as in the instance just cited, possessed a singing voice, an occasion was to be furnished her of displaying it, how much soever it might be to the

contempt of Shakespeare and consistency, and to the degradation of his heroine. And so, the "cuckoo song" was taken out of the mouth of Armado's page in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' to be warbled in the ears of her lover by the "heavenly Rosalind." This barbarism, however, it is due to Mr. Macready to observe, was suppressed in the last Drury-Lane revival of this play; but another grand impropriety was retained, which has contributed not a little to the popular misconception of the character (since it is upheld to this hour by the editors of Shakespeare as well as the managers)—the making *Rosalind herself* come forward to deliver that *unfeminine* epilogue, which its every word shews to have been written for the mouth of the *male* actor who, in Shakespeare's time, constantly enacted "the lady's" part, and to be spoken *in his proper masculine person.*

But the point, in the last London revival of the play, which most demands observation in this place, is, the perpetuation which it exhibits of the old green-room notion, that the most prominent *comic* actress of the day must make the best Rosalind; that the qualifications for the heroine of 'As You Like It,' are to be sufficiently proved, for example, by the enacting of a *Constance* (in 'The Love Chase'), or a *Lady Gay Spanker* (in 'London Assurance'). And truly, if the manager understood Shakespeare no better than to offer to the public such a personation of one of his most ideal heroines, the actress herself must be held excusable for displaying in it, to the utmost of her power, her peculiar joyous graces.

It is not for its own sake merely, we repeat, that we care to notice what passes on the stage in reference to these great Shakespearian creations,—but yet more on account of that misreading of Shakespeare, even in the closet, which these continued theatrical perversions contribute so largely to create and to perpetuate. False impressions of this nature can be effaced from the minds of the living generation only by juster impressions conveyed through the same

vivid medium. The stage alone can thoroughly eradicate those current misconceptions regarding Shakespeare which the stage has implanted. In this view it becomes an indispensable part of the duty which we have undertaken to perform towards Shakespeare and his readers, to point out, not only any source of perversion, but any means of correction, that is to be found upon our stage as at present existing.

The comparatively low popular notions, then, respecting the character of Rosalind, can be rapidly and thoroughly rectified only by a true Shakespearian actress, in the highest and most peculiar sense of the term. She must no more be either a tragic or a comic performer, in the limited and exclusive sense, than the 'As You Like It' is a comedy, or 'Cymbeline,' for instance, is a tragedy, in the narrow signification. Indeed, the power of competently personating Imogen, affords of itself a far greater presumption of capacity for enacting Rosalind than is to be inferred from the most perfect performance of all the properly *comic* parts in the world. These are two of the noblest and most exquisitely compounded among the ideal women of Shakespeare, each the ascendant character in the drama to which she belongs. In both we find the same essential tenderness,—the same clear and prompt intelligence,—the same consummate grace and self-possession in enacting those respective masculine parts which the exigencies of their fortune compel them to assume. The deeper pathos and the graver wisdom which lend a more solemn though scarcely more tender colouring to the character of Imogen, seem hardly more than may be sufficiently accounted for by that maturer developement which one and the same original character would receive from the maturer years, the graver position, and more tragic trials of the wife, in which the heroine of 'Cymbeline' is set before us,—as compared with that early bloom, and those fond anxieties of youthful courtship, which we behold in

Rosalind. Each, too, let us observe, is a princely heiress, bestowing her affections upon "a poor but worthy gentleman."

In a former paper, we have spoken at length of Miss Helen Faucit's personation of Imogen; and it now becomes our duty to point the attention of our readers to her performance of Rosalind—the more so, for the very reason that the present lamentable position of the London stage compels the actress of highest and truest Shakespearian genius that we possess to be enacting this among the rest of her most interesting characters before provincial audiences. During the successive engagements which have occupied her for several months past at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Newcastle, we learn, from the journals of the respective places, that Juliet and Rosalind, but especially the latter, have been the most favourite and most admired of her Shakespearian parts. In our introductory paper, we have characterised in general this lady's personation of the heroine of 'As You Like It,' after witnessing it for the first time, at Drury-Lane, on occasion of the indisposition of the comic actress to whom it had been assigned for the season. We saw it, therefore, under all the disadvantages of hasty preparation; and since then, have seen it under the scarcely lesser ones of the very inefficient support afforded on a provincial stage. Nevertheless, we found our anticipations, derived from our general conception as to the inmost spirit of Miss Faucit's Shakespearian personations, more than realised. In her protracted absence from the London boards, we will not specify details of her acting in this part, which our metropolitan readers have no means of immediately verifying: we prefer citing one or two of the most comprehensively expressive sentences on the subject that we find among those notices by the Edinburgh press which, with every variety in their expressions, have been unanimously enthusiastic in their admiration of this performance, which, after its repetition for the sixth or seventh time, we find 'The

Scotsman' of the 6th instant describing as "now her favourite part."

Among the notices in question, the remarks of 'The Edinburgh Observer' (20th Feb.) seem the most to our present purpose. As regards this actress's nice preservation of that identity of dignity and delicacy between the Rosalind of the court and the Rosalind of the forest, which we had especially admired in witnessing her performance, but which both critics and performers have so commonly overlooked, the northern critic says:—

"As we have but too often seen the Rosalind of the stage, she was merely the pretty coquette, roguish and knowing in the small artifices of a cold nature; or, what is worse, a coarse and not over nice woman of fashion, who had laid down her maidenhood with her dress, as if she thought, in despite of the author, that it was actually necessary that she should wear doublet and hose in her disposition. How different is it with this lady's Rosalind! In the most joyous outbursts of her sparkling fancy amid the freedom of the forest, we never miss the duke's daughter, whom, in the first act, we have seen, in the gentleness and unconscious grace of her deportment, the leading ornament of the court of her usurping uncle. She is never less than the high-born and high-bred gentlewoman."

And then, as to that other important point, the peculiar character which the performer gives to the *liveliness* of the heroine, the same observer states his conviction, "that the secret of Miss Helen Faucit's excellence lies in her fine intuitions of human character in its most diverse aspects, and knowing that *the deepest and most delicate sportiveness springs only from an earnest and sensitive nature, to which thoughtfulness and the capacity of strong emotion are habitual.*"

Feeling, so thoroughly as we do, the perfect truth of these testimonies, owing to the very attentive study of this lady's Shakespearian acting which we took occasion to make during her last London season, we

can only add, in pure zeal for the better diffusion of a genuine understanding of the poet, our hope, that so able an illustrator of his nobler conceptions, may be speedily restored to the widest and most effective scene for the exercise of her versatile powers.

P. S.

DECEMBER 24TH, 1846.

We have only now to add, that the increased frequency with which Miss Faucit has acted this character, has obtained for her performance a constantly increasing appreciation. Thus, for instance, her personation of it at the Haymarket, in one of those rare appearances which, for so long a period, she has made on the London boards, gave occasion to the theatrical reporter of 'The Athenæum,' in the number of that journal for Nov. 8th, 1845, to attest her true and exquisite spiritualization of the part—presenting to us, he says, "the poetic impersonation of a vision rather than the bodily actualization of it on the stage." And, more recently, 'The Dublin Evening Mail,' of Oct. 30th, 1846, describing her performance there on the previous Wednesday (since repeated by the Lord Lieutenant's command), bears testimony to "the tones of a voice which is all music, and the graces of a person which is all symmetry, and the charms of a face beaming with the intellectual beauty of genius and inspiration," which enable her to present to her audience "Rosalind herself—the wise, the witty, the arch, the tender, the romantic, the faithful, the high-born, courtly-mannered, and beautiful"—"the *very* Rosalind" of Shakespeare.

VI.

CHARACTERS IN 'MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.'

1.—BEATRICE AND BENEDICK AT WAR.

[August 10th, 1844.]

AMONGST all the dramatic characters of Shakespeare, there are no two of which the developement is more closely intertwined than that of the personages most prominent in the drama now before us. This developement, let us also observe, is, in fact, the main subject of the piece. We find it the more necessary to indicate this emphatically at the outset, because Hazlitt, Campbell, and others, in their critical notices of this play, have mistakingly represented the dramatic use here made of the characters of Beatrice and Benedick, as merely subordinate to the interest which attaches to the nuptial fortunes of Hero. Coleridge, on the contrary, seeing ever more truly and deeply into the inmost spirit of Shakespeare's dramatic art, instances this very piece as illustrating that "independence of the dramatic interest on the plot," which he enumerates among those characteristics by which, he says, it seems to him that Shakespeare's plays "are distinguished from those of all other dramatic poets." *

* 'Literary Remains,' vol. ii. pp. 77, 80.

"The interest in the plot," he continues, "is always, in fact, on account of the characters, not *vice versâ*, as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvass, and no more. Hence arises the true justification of the same stratagem being used in regard to Benedick and Beatrice, the vanity in each being alike. Take away from the 'Much Ado About Nothing' all that which is not indispensable to the plot, either as having little to do with it, or, at best, like Dogberry and his comrades, forced into the service, when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen and night-constables would have answered the mere necessities of the action; take away Benedick, Beatrice, Dogberry, and the reaction of the former on the character of Hero,—and what will remain? In other writers the main agent of the plot is always the prominent character; in Shakespeare it is so, or is not so, as the character is in itself calculated, or not calculated, to form the plot. Don John is the mainspring of the plot of this play, but he is merely shown and then withdrawn."*

A little more attention to this view of the matter might have saved more than one critic from pronouncing some notable misjudgments upon this piece, and especially as regards the character of Beatrice. Campbell, for instance, might have deliberated longer before he declared her, in one emphatic word, to be "an odious woman." Hazlitt might have hesitated even to tell us that she "turns all things into ridicule, and is proof against everything serious." And Mrs. Jameson, while admitting, as she does, the strong intellect and generous feeling that characterize this heroine, might have been led to see that they are something more than the merely *secondary* constituents in her dramatic being. Indeed, when we are told respecting any leading female character of Shakespeare, that, upon the whole, wit and wilfulness predominate in it over intellect and feeling, we may fairly suspect that such critic's view of that character is distorted or imperfect. Yet more, when we are told that, in a Shakespearian drama of which prosperous love is the principal subject, the heroine is nothing less than an *odious* personage, we may pretty safely reject the allegation altogether.

The first critical oversight, then, which has com-

* 'Literary Remains,' vol. ii. p. 80—81.

monly been committed in examining this play, has been the not perceiving that the complete unfolding of the characters of Beatrice and her lover forms the capital business of the piece. The second error, involving such strange misconceptions respecting the heroine in particular, has been the overlooking or disregarding that close affinity which the dramatist has established between the two characters, rendering them, as far as the difference of sex will permit, so nearly each other's counterpart, that any argument that shall prove odiousness in the one, must of inevitable necessity demonstrate it in the other. Consequent on these is the third and most important error of all in estimating the predominant spirit of this drama. Its critics have overlooked entirely the art with which the dramatist has contrived and used the incidents of the piece in such manner as to bring out, by distinct and natural gradations, the profound seriousness which lies beneath all the superficial levity seen at first in the true hero and heroine,—until the very pair who have given the most decidedly comic character to the outset of the play, are found on the point of giving it the most tragic turn towards its close.

The task therefore, which more especially lies before us, is, to trace distinctly, from the dramatist's own lucid page, this parallel progress of the two leading characters in question. In doing this, the most natural order seems to prescribe that we should begin with shewing what is the true spirit and quality of that exuberant wit in the heroine which the critics have interpreted so terribly to her disadvantage.

Mrs. Jameson, though deviating less into the misconceptions respecting this character than most of the male critics with whom we are acquainted, yet declares to us:—

"In her wit (which is brilliant without being imaginative) there is a touch of insolence not unfrequent in women, when the wit predominates over reflection and imagination. In her temper, too, there is a slight infusion of the termagant; and her satirical humour plays with such an unrespective levity over all

subjects alike, that it required a profound knowledge of women to bring such a character within the pale of our sympathy."

Again, in a following page of the same essay:—

"A haughty, excitable, and violent temper is another of the characteristics of Beatrice," &c.

But how, we would ask, is this estimate of the nature of Beatrice's temper, and the quality of her humour, to be reconciled with that significant piece of dialogue on the subject which we find introduced in the second act, when the heroine has already made a full display of her wit in all its exuberant freedom, before the auditor, and before her uncle's princely guests?—

Beatrice. But I beseech your grace, pardon me; I was born to speak all mirth, and no matter.

Don Pedro. Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you; for, out of question, you were born in a merry hour.

Beat. No, sure, my lord, my mother cry'd; but then, there was a star danced, and under that was I born.

. . . . . .

Don Ped. By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

Leonato. There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord; she is never sad but when she sleeps; and not ever sad then: for I have heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamed of unhappiness, and waked herself with laughing.

Surely, no terms can well be devised more expressive of a disposition to good-humoured gaiety and raillery, as opposed to everything ill-humouredly sarcastic and satirical. We have not only the lady herself protesting that she speaks "all mirth;" not only the testimony of her uncle and guardian, supported by that of his daughter—with whom she has been brought up as a sister—that her disposition is devoid of "the melancholy element;" but here is the prince himself, after a full and varied experience of her deportment and conversation, declaring her to be "a pleasant-spirited lady." On this consideration it is, that he so immediately determines, "She were an excellent wife for Benedick,"—not in mere levity, as the critics seem commonly to have construed it, but in serious care for

the welfare of this other favoured follower of his, as he had already shown it in providing so advantageous a match for his prime favourite, the count Claudio. It should be observed, also, that the Prince's declaration of her fitness to become the wife of Benedick is made by way of rejoinder to Leonato's assurance that "she mocks all her wooers out of suit;" so that Don Pedro, when observing just before, "She cannot endure to hear tell of a husband," had already satisfied himself that this non-endurance of hers, like all the rest of her raillery, had no serious intention, but, according to her own definition, was "all mirth, and no matter."

What else, indeed, can any unprejudiced reader or auditor infer from that passage in the opening of this same act, where Beatrice, on occasion of Don Pedro's expected wooing of her cousin, gives the fullest career to her laughing humour on the subject of marriage?—

Leon. By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.

Antonio. In faith, she is too curst.

Beat. Too curst is more than curst: I shall lessen God's sending, that way: for it is said, *God sends a curst cow short horns;* but to a cow too curst he sends none.

Leon. So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns.

Beat. Just, if he send me no husband; for the which blessing I am at him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord! I could not endure a husband, with a beard on his face; I had rather lie in the woollen.

Leon. You may light upon a husband that hath no beard.

Beat. What should I do with him?—dress him in my apparel, and make him my waiting-gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth; and he that hath no beard is less than a man: and he that is more than a youth is not for me; and he that is less than a man, I am not for him. Therefore, I will even take sixpence in earnest of the bear-herd, and lead his apes into hell.

Leon. Well then, go you into hell?

Beat. No, but to the gate; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say, *Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids:* so deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter for the heavens;

he shews me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

. . . . . .

Leon. Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

Beat. Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman, to be over-mastered with a piece of valiant dust?—to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethren; and truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred.

Leon. Daughter, remember what I told you; if the prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer.

Beat. The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time: if the prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For, hear me, Hero:—wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.

Leon. Cousin, you apprehend passing shrewdly.

Beat. I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight.

Then, how little of the spirit of a genuine satirist of matrimony do we find in all Beatrice's words and behaviour respecting the courtship and betrothing of her cousin. Take, for instance, the following brief dialogue relating to the latter:—

Leon. Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and all grace say Amen to it.

Beat. Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

Claudio. Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much. Lady, as you are mine, I am yours: I give away myself for you, and dote upon the exchange.

Beat. Speak, cousin; or if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let him not speak neither.

Don Ped. In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

Beat. Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care.—My cousin tells him in his ear, that he is in her heart.

Claud. And so she doth, cousin.

Beat. Good lord, for alliance! Thus goes every one to the world but I—and I am sun-burned; I may sit in a corner, and cry, heigh ho! for a husband. . . Cousins, God give you joy!

Here we find this anti-matrimonial lady thinking much rather of getting a husband for herself, than of preventing her cousin from accepting one. But it is not only her habitual raillery against marriage in general, that amounts to mere pleasantry and nothing more: her antipathy to the individual cavalier upon whom she exercises her riotous wit, is not any more in earnest. Upon this point the critics would have done well to attend to her uncle's intimation in the opening scene, addressed to Don Pedro's messenger who is listening to the first display of Beatrice's humour at the expense of the absent Benedick:—

You must not, sir, mistake my niece: there is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there is a skirmish of wit between them.

That in this merry warfare the gentleman had been the original aggressor, is pretty evident from his own avowal to his friend Claudio, when the latter first asks his opinion respecting Hero:—

Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgment; or would you have me speak, after my custom, as being a professed tyrant to their sex?

And though, at Claudio's earnest request, he tries hard to "speak in sober judgment," yet we find him relapsing immediately into his inveterate habit of talking as "a professed tyrant" to the fair sex:—

.... But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

Claud. I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

Ben. Is it come to this i'faith? Hath not the world one man, but he will wear his cap with suspicion? Shall I never see a bachelor of three-score again? Go to, i'faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke,—wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays.

And again, flouting in like manner the Count's protestation of his passion to Don Pedro, he is reminded by the latter—"Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty." And in the fol-

lowing dialogue he seems quite eager to justify the imputation:—

Ben. That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but that I will have a recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldric, all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none; and the fine is (for the which I may go the finer), I will live a bachelor.

Don Ped. I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

Ben. With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord; not with love. Prove that ever I lose more blood with love, than I will get again with drinking; pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen, and hang me up at the door of a brothel-house for the sign of blind Cupid.

Don Ped. Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a notable argument.

Ben. If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat, and shoot at me; and be that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder and called Adam.

Don Ped. Well, as time shall try;—*In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.*

Ben. The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns and set them in my forehead; and let me be vilely painted; and in such great letters as they write, *Here is good horse to hire,* let them signify under my sign, *Here you may see Benedick the married man.*

Claud. If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.

Don Ped. Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice, thou wilt quake for this shortly.

Ben. I look for an earthquake too, then.

It is plain that a man who not only professed such vehement hostility to marriage, but habitually grounded it upon the gravest of all imputations that can be brought against womankind in general, must bring upon him the assaults of such a spirit as Beatrice, so ardent and so intelligent. She *must* attack him in sheer defence of her own sex; and we see that he is the only individual of the piece whom she does attack. But it is a cause of quite an opposite nature that gives double keenness to the shafts of her sarcasm. Benedick's talkatively pertinacious heresy "in despite of beauty," irritates and tantalizes her the more by continually obtruding itself

upon her from the lips of a man who otherwise attracts her personal preference, as one who,

> For shape, for bearing, argument, and valour,
> Goes foremost in report through Italy.

It is the prior interest which he has in her heart on this account, that really makes her take so much trouble to "put down" his "professed tyranny" to her sex. It is this interest that makes her, in the opening scene of the play, so eagerly enquire of Don Pedro's messenger concerning Benedick's present reputation and fortune. How plainly may we see her, under the ironical guise which her questionings assume, delighting to draw from her informant one commendation after another of the gentleman's valour and other eminent qualifications:—

Beat. I pray you, is Signior Montanto returned from the wars, or not?

Messenger. I know none of that name, lady; there was none such in the army, of any sort.

Leon. What is he that you ask for, niece?

Hero. My cousin means Signior Benedick, of Padua.

Mess. Oh, he is returned; and as pleasant as ever he was.

Beat. He set up his bills here in Messina, and challenged Cupid at the flight; and my uncle's fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid, and challenged him at the bird-bolt. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed?—for, indeed, I promised to eat all of his killing.

Leon. Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you, I doubt it not.

Mess. He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

Beat. You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it: he is a very valiant trencher-man; he hath an excellent stomach.

Mess. And a good soldier, too, lady.

Beat. And a good soldier to a lady; but what is he to a lord?

Mess. A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuffed with all honourable virtues.

Beat. It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuffed man;—but for the stuffing;—well, we are all mortal.

Leon. You must not, sir, mistake my niece: there is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her; they never meet but there is a skirmish of wit between them.

Beat. Alas, he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict, four of his five wits went halting off; and now is the whole man

governed with one: so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm, let him bear it for a difference between himself and his horse; for it is all the wealth that he hath left, to be known a reasonable creature. Who is his companion now?—He hath every month a new sworn brother.

Mess. Is it possible?

Beat. Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.

Mess. I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.

Beat. No; an he were, I would burn my study. But, I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young squarer now, that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

Mess. He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

Beat. O lord! he will hang upon him like a disease: he is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently mad. God help the noble Claudio; if he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere he be cured.

Mess. I will hold friends with you, lady.

Beat. Do, good friend.

Leon. *You* will never run mad, niece.

Beat. No, not till a hot January.

In all this, we say, the lady's part of the dialogue seems inspired quite as much by the desire to hear good news of Benedick as by the love of turning him into ridicule: it is of his "good parts" that she is chiefly thinking. But he no sooner makes his appearance, than he re-awakens all her resentment by indulging, in the first words that he utters, his habit of satirical reflection upon her sex. Don Pedro, at his first interview with Leonato and his family, says, turning to Hero, "I think this is your daughter." The father's answer, "Her mother hath many times told me so," brings from Benedick the question, "Were you in doubt, sir, that you asked her?" And accordingly, in the altercation that follows between him and the lady Hero's lively cousin, we find the whole ardour and ingenuity of the latter exerting themselves to humble and silence, if possible, the satirical loquacity of this vivacious cavalier:—

Don Ped. Truly, the lady fathers herself. Be happy, lady! for you are like an honourable father.

Ben. If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

Beat. I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick; nobody marks you.

Ben. What, my dear lady Disdain! are you yet living?

Beat. Is it possible Disdain should die, while she hath such meet food to feed on as Signior Benedick? Courtesy herself must convert to Disdain, if you come in her presence.

Ben. Then is Courtesy a turn-coat. But it is certain, I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart, that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

Beat. A dear happiness to women; they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God, and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that; I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow, than a man swear he loves me.

Ben. God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

Beat. Scratching could not make it worse an 'twere such a face as yours were.

Ben. Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

Beat. A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

Ben. I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, o'God's name. I have done.

Beat. You always end with a jade's trick; I know you of old.

Here, it must be admitted, the lady's object is evidently to talk the gentleman down, by dint not only of perseverance, but of poignant wit and merciless retort. She has no opportunity for argument, were she ever so much inclined to use it; for it is by anything but argument that Benedick himself carries on his verbal warfare against her sex; in this matter, as Claudio says, he "never could maintain his part, but in the force of his will." And this pertinacity of assertion in him is rendered more annoying by his rather obtrusive loquacity: for this over-talkativeness, let us observe, is not merely attributed to him by Beatrice under the excitement of their "skirmishes of wit;" we find it, in the opening of the second act, coolly descanted on by herself and her uncle, and deliberately placed in contrast with the taciturnity of Don Pedro's brother:—

Leon. Was not Count John here at supper?

Ant. I saw him not.

Beat. How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heart-burned an hour after.

Hero. He is of a very melancholy disposition.

Beat. He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick: the one is too like an image, and says nothing: and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.

Leon. Then, half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face——

Beat. With a good leg, and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse,—such a man would win any woman in the world,—if he could get her good will.

Beatrice, then, we repeat, if she will maintain the honour of her sex at all, has no choice but to fight Benedick with his own weapons of unsparing raillery; and in the use of these, possessing, with superior exuberance of invention, the great advantage of "having her quarrel just," she constantly proves herself an over-match for him. This is the kind of defeat most mortifying of all to a man of his character—the more humiliating that he receives it from a woman—and most irritating of all from the woman for whom he really entertains the like personal preference that she cherishes for him. Hence it is, that this "merry-hearted, pleasant-spirited" lady, as everybody else finds her to be, seems to him an incarnate fury—as we find him declaring, just after their first "skirmish" above cited, in reply to Claudio's commendations of Hero's personal charms:—

There's her cousin, an she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December.

Indeed, the gentleman's extravagant irritation at that sharpness of retort from his fair antagonist which he is continually provoking, as contrasted with the exulting tone of conscious superiority on her part, is exceedingly amusing. Thus, in the masquerade scene, again, though he has clearly been the aggressor, yet he lays all the blame of the verbal hostility upon her, and has all the exasperation to himself:—

Beat. Will you not tell me who told you so?

Ben. No, you shall pardon me.

Beat. Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Ben. Not now.

Beat. That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the 'Hundred Merry Tales.' Well, this was Signior Benedick that said so.

Ben. What's he?

Beat. I am sure you know him well enough.

Ben. Not I, believe me.

Beat. Did he never make you laugh?

Ben. I pray you, what is he?

Beat. Why, he is the Prince's jester—a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossible slanders; none but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villany; for he both pleases men and angers them; and then they laugh at him, and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet; I would he had boarded me.

Ben. When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say.

Beat. Do, do; he'll but break a comparison or two on me, which, peradventure, not marked or not laughed at, strikes him into melancholy; and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night.—We must follow the leaders.

These sportive sarcasms the gentleman finds far more irritating than any absolutely false imputations would have been. They are merely exaggerated representations of his actual failings—his loquaciously self-complacent raillery, and his habitual satire of the other sex; and they are addressed to him by the woman whom, on every other account, he is inclined to be in love with. Nothing short of this could account for the ludicrous extravagance of resentment which he betrays on the occasion. Thus, when, according to his custom, he has just been rallying Claudio upon Don Pedro's supposed treachery towards him regarding Hero, he says to himself:—

But, that my lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me!—The Prince's fool!—Ha! it may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so—I am apt to do myself wrong—I am not so reputed: it is the base, the bitter disposition of Beatrice, that puts the world into her person and so gives me out. Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

And again, to Don Pedro himself:—

Oh, she misused me past the endurance of a block; an oak, but with one green leaf upon it, would have answered her: my very visor began to assume life, and scold with her. She told

me, not thinking I had been myself, that I was the Prince's jester; that I was duller than a great thaw; huddling jest upon jest, with such impossible conveyance, upon me, that I stood like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs. If her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there were no living near her—she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed: she'would have made Hercules have turned spit; yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire, too. Come, talk not of her; you shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her; for, certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary; and people sin upon purpose, because they would go thither; so, indeed, all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follow her!

Don Ped. Look, here she comes.

Ben. Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the farthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of Prester John's foot: fetch you a hair off the great Cham's beard; do you any embassage to the Pigmies—rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy.——You have no employment for me?

Don Ped. None, but to desire your good company.

Ben. Oh God, sir, here's a dish I love not—I cannot endure my lady Tongue! [*Exit.*

Don Ped. Come, lady, come—you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

Beat. Indeed, my lord, he lent it me a while; and I gave him use for it—a double heart for his single one.—Marry, once before he won it of me with false dice; therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

Don Ped. You have put him down, lady, you have put him down.

This is the climax of mutual repulsion between our hero and heroine. Each is conscious of liking the other in every respect but one—which one, however, produces such violent irritation between them, as not only prevents each of them from thoroughly loving the other, but makes it impossible for either to perceive this decided partiality entertained in the other's breast. Our next paper will be occupied with shewing, in opposition to the established critical notions on the subject, that the ingenious intervention of their common friends, in the ensuing scenes of the

drama, is employed not only benevolently, but wisely, to convert this partial antipathy into a perfect sympathy.

2.—BENEDICK AND BEATRICE CONVERTED.

[August 17th, 1844.]

ALREADY we have indicated, in general terms, the absurdity of supposing, with most of the critics, that Shakespeare has represented the common friends of Benedick and Beatrice as being either so undiscerning as not to perceive the unsuitableness of this pair for a conjugal union, or so wanton as to seek to bring about their marriage in mere levity, knowing that it could not contribute to their mutual happiness. Let us now consider somewhat more particularly the spirit in which this project is undertaken—first of all, as shown in the family conversation which immediately follows that announcing the engagement between Count Claudio and the lady Hero:—

Don Ped. Count Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

Claud. To-morrow, my lord. Time goes on crutches, till love have all his rites.

Leon. Not till Monday, my dear son; which is hence a just seven-night; and a time too brief too, to have all things answer my mind.

Don Ped. Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing; but, I warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us; I will, in the interim, undertake one of Hercules' labours; which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other. I would fain have it a match; and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

Leon. My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.

Claud. And I, my lord.

Don Ped. And you too, gentle Hero?

Hero. I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

Don Ped. And Benedick is not the unhopefullest husband that I know: thus far can I praise him; he is of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirmed honesty. I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick; and I, with your two helps, will so practise on Benedick, that in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.

In the arbour scene which follows, Benedick's friends and Beatrice's guardian shew in their conversation that they take precisely the same view of the moral relation already subsisting between the gentleman and the lady, that we have stated in our foregoing exposition. In this discourse, framed expressly for Benedick's overhearing, they apply themselves, on the one hand, to praise those qualities in the lady which they know that Benedick admires already:—

Don Ped. She's an excellent sweet lady; and, out of all suspicion, she is virtuous.

Claud. And she is exceeding wise, &c.

But, above all, they combat what they believe to be the sole impediment to his loving her outright—his notion of her violent aversion to himself—by the ingeniously and elaborately natural picture which they draw of the workings of her alleged passion. In this piece of acting, be it observed, Leonato himself, Beatrice's uncle and guardian, sustains the principal part; he it is who most particularly describes her pretended sufferings, which, he says, are reported to him by her bosom-friend and companion, his daughter Hero. Benedick, then, may well be excused for exclaiming in his concealment:—"I should think this a gull, but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide itself in such reverence." While, on the other hand, those critics, we must repeat, are less excusable, who have regarded the venerable governor as a personage so devoid of serious

care for his niece's welfare, as to carry on a plot like this for idle and even mischievous diversion.

Once persuaded of her passion for himself, the revulsion of Benedick's feelings towards the woman whom he had every other predisposition to love, becomes inevitable: but they receive additional stimulus from the other side of the expedient which his friends employ against him. They flatter his self-love by commending his personal qualifications:—

Claud. He is a very proper man.
Don Ped. He hath, indeed, a good outward happiness.
Claud. 'Fore Gad, and, in my mind, very wise.
Don Ped. He doth, indeed, shew some sparks that are like wit.
Leon. And I take him to be valiant.
Don Ped. As Hector, I assure you, &c.

And these very praises give the greater keenness to their reflections upon his alleged disdainfulness:—

Leon. .... I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.
Don Ped. I would she had bestowed this dotage on me; I would have daffed all other respects, and made her half myself: I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what he will say.
Leon. Were it good, think you?
Claud. Hero thinks surely, she will die; for she says, she will die if he love her not; and she will die ere she makes her love known; and she will die, if he woo her, rather than 'bate one breath of her accustomed crossness.
Don Ped. She doth well: if she should make tender of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible spirit.

But his friends know too well both his general manliness of character and his particular predilection for Beatrice, to apprehend in reality that he would spurn her affection. Thus, although Claudio himself, in the course of this same colloquy, has said in Benedick's hearing, that, if informed of her attachment, "he would but make a sport of it, and torment the poor lady worse," yet we find him, at the end of it, whispering to his companions—"If he do not dote on her upon this, I will never trust my expectation."

To perceive this revulsion of feeling in all its force, we should first revert to that soliloquy of Benedick's just before he retreats into the arbour, which, at the moment when, to repeat Don Pedro's expression, he had been finally "put down" by the only woman for whom he had felt any decided inclination, has exhibited him to us less matrimonially disposed than ever:—

I do much wonder, that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviour to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn, by falling in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and fife; and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe: I have known when he would have walked ten mile afoot, to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving the fashion of a new doublet. He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthographer; his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted, and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair; yet I am well: another is wise; yet I am well: another virtuous; yet I am well: but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace. Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none; virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild, or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel; of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be—of what colour it please God.

It is, in truth, no less amusing than it is interesting and instructive, to mark the sudden transition from this full profession of such easy indifference, made by our hero just before his concealment in the arbour, to that other rumination of his, on coming out of it, wherein we find the primary feeling to be, his eagerness to respond freely and generously to the alleged affection on the part of his fair tormentor,—while the endeavour to reconcile such public declaration with the saving of his own self-love from mortifying ridicule, finds only the second place in his thoughts:—

This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady; it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured: they say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her: they say, too, that she will rather die than give any sign of affection. I did never think to marry. I must not seem proud. Happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair; 'tis a truth, I can bear them witness: —and virtuous; 'tis so, I cannot reprove it:—and wise, but for loving me. By my troth, it is no addition to her wit—nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her! I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage. But doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips, and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain, awe a man from the career of his humour? No: the world must be peopled. When I said I should die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.——Here comes Beatrice. By this day, she's a fair lady. I do spy some marks of love in her.

No wonder that, in the little scene which follows, he should attribute the lady's perseverance in her hostile tone to that resolution of hers, in spite of her love, which he has just heard Claudio alleging—that "she will die, if he woo her, rather than she will 'bate one breath of her accustomed crossness." This persuasion of our hero's here produces one of the most exquisite morsels of genuine comedy that occur throughout this "pleasant-spirited" play:—

Beat. Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

Ben. Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

Beat. I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me. If it had been painful I would not have come.

Ben. You take pleasure in the message?

Beat. Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point, and choke a daw withal. You have no stomach, signior? —fare you well. [*Exit.*

Ben. Ha! *Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner*—there's a double meaning in that. *I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me*—that's as much as to say, Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks!—If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain!—If I do not love her, I am a Jew!—I will go get her picture!

So far, Benedick is the only deluded party. Let us now turn to consider the parallel revolution worked in the feelings of the heroine by the like stratagem, practised upon her by the lady Hero and her female attendants. Here, as we should expect, we find the motives appealed to in the breast of Beatrice to be just the same, and holding the same relation to one another, as those which we have seen acted upon in the mind of Benedick. Her fair entrappers flatter her admiration of the signior's high qualities:—

Ursula. Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full, as fortunate a bed
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?
Hero. O God of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man.
. . . . . .
He is the only man of Italy,
Always excepted my dear Claudio.
Urs. I pray you, be not angry with me, madam,
Speaking my fancy; signior Benedick,
For shape, for bearing, argument, and valour,
Goes foremost in report through Italy.
Hero. Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.
Urs. His excellence did earn it ere he had it.

The brevity with which Hero and her gentlewoman speak of Benedick's alleged passion, and the ready credence which it nevertheless obtains in the mind of Beatrice, as contrasted with the more hesitating admittance which Benedick yields to the story of Beatrice's "enraged affection" for himself, results with perfect nature and propriety from the very different character of the source from which the pretended information comes. Benedick might well, in the first instance, have suspected that the talk which he heard going on upon this matter between the Prince and Claudio—so accustomed to pass their jests upon him, especially on that very point—might be, as he says, "a gull," in which it was just possible they might have induced the old gentleman to take part, for the sake of humouring their momentary diversion. But when we consider the quiet, modest, simple character of Hero, and the relation of sisterly intimacy and

affection so long established between her and Beatrice, we see it to be utterly impossible that the idea should once enter the apprehension of the latter, that her cousin might be engaged in a plot of this nature, however innocent, upon herself. Mrs. Jameson, indeed, tells us:—"The immediate success of the trick is a most natural consequence of the self-assurance and magnanimity of her character: she is so accustomed to assert dominion over the spirits of others, that she cannot suspect the possibility of a plot laid against herself." We must, however, observe that any such notion on our heroine's part, of an impossibility that she should be plotted against in any quarter, would have argued habitual simplicity in her, much rather than habitual penetration; while the fact that no such suspicion once occurs to her respecting her gentle cousin, certainly implies in her neither weakness of discernment nor strength of presumption. The following brief colloquy, then, may well suffice to carry conviction to her mind. Was it for her to imagine her simple-hearted cousin not only inventing the fact itself, but feigning the conference upon it between herself, her betrothed husband, and the Prince?—

Urs. But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?
Hero. So says the prince, and my new-trothed lord.
Urs. And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?
Hero. They did entreat me to acquaint her of it:
But I persuaded them, if they lov'd Benedick,
To wish him wrestle with affection,
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

Here, as in the case of Benedick, the first grand appeal is made to the affections of the individual played upon, by assuring her that the seemingly violent aversion of the man whom she likes on all other accounts, has masked a really passionate devotion. The second and decisive appeal in this case, too, as in the former, is made, not to the "vanity" of the character, as we find even Coleridge contending

(in the passage of his 'Literary Remains' quoted in our foregoing paper), but to its *generosity*—a distinction, be it observed, affecting the whole leading spirit of the piece. Hero and her confidant know full well how incapable Beatrice is of scoffing at the passion of the man whom she has ever admired, and cannot help loving now that she believes him to be seriously enamoured of herself: but they choose to administer a stimulus to the explicit yielding of her affection, by alarming her lest her established character for "mocking," as her uncle says, "all her wooers out of suit," should operate to deter her lover from a declaration which she now so earnestly desires. While, therefore, on the one hand, she hears herself flattered, by being given to understand from the lips of Ursula,—

> She cannot be so much without true judgment
> (Having so swift and excellent a wit
> As she is priz'd to have) as to refuse
> So rare a gentleman as signior Benedick,—

it is, on the other hand, we maintain, the generous yet more than the self-regarding part of her passion, that feels itself alarmed by the following animated descant upon her habit of raillery as exercised on her previous wooers, and anticipation of the silence it may impose, and the despair it may inflict, upon her present suitor:—

> *Hero.* But Nature never fram'd a woman's heart
> Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice,
> Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
> Misprising what they look on; and her wit
> Values itself so highly, that to her
> All matter else seems weak: she cannot love,
> Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
> She is so self-endeared.
> *Urs.* Sure, I think so;
> And therefore, certainly, it were not good
> She knew his love, lest she make sport of it.
> *Hero.* Why, you speak truth: I never yet saw man,
> How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featur'd,
> But she would spell him backward. If fair-faced,
> She'd swear the gentleman should be her sister:
> If black, why, Nature, drawing of an antic,

Made a foul blot: if tall, a lance ill-headed:
If low, an agate very vilely cut:
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none:
So turns she every man the wrong side out;
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth.
Urs. Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.
Hero. No; not to be so odd, and from all fashions,
As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable.
But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
She'd mock me into air; oh, she would laugh me
Out of myself, press me to death with wit.
Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,
Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly;
It were a better death than die with mocks,
Which is as bad as die with tickling.
Urs. Yet tell her of it; hear what she will say.
Hero. No; rather I will go to Benedick,
And counsel him to fight against his passion:
And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders,
To stain my cousin with; one doth not know
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

These mortifying anticipations regarding herself, which are thus set before her, are rendered yet more bitter by the contrasting allusion to her cousin's approaching nuptials, which artfully closes the dialogue in question:—

Urs. When are you married, madam?
Hero. Why, every day—to-morrow. Come, go in;
I'll shew thee some attires; and have thy counsel,
Which is the best to furnish me to-morrow.

So that Hero's 'gentlewoman, confident in the completeness with which they have played their parts, exclaims to her mistress—

She's lim'd, I warrant you; we have caught her, madam.

This is sufficiently proved by the short soliloquy of Beatrice that immediately follows, the more expressive for its very brevity:—

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!
No glory lives behind the back of such.

> And Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
> Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand;
> If thou dost love, my kindness shall invite thee
> To bind our loves up in a holy band:
> For others say, thou dost deserve; and I
> Believe it better than reportingly.

For the reason above stated, we must object very decidedly to Mrs. Jameson's interpretation of this passage, that Beatrice falls, "with all the headlong simplicity of a child, into the snare laid for her affections." It is neither simplicity nor vanity that makes both the hero and the heroine so readily admit the suggestion so artfully addressed to them by their respective friends. It is, that the heart of each whispers them how very possible it is, after all, that the other may be inclined to love, in spite of all appearances to the contrary,—and that it is not possible for them to suspect the nearest and most attached of their common friends, of combining to trifle with them in such a matter. Moreover, the impulse on either part, which so rapidly brings about a mutual declaration, is not of a selfish, but a generous nature. Neither does it, when considered with reference to the previously habitual language of both parties respecting marriage, imply any real inconsistency of character. Neither man nor woman ever railed against marriage, who had once experienced true love;—but persons of the bold and ready wit attributed to Benedick and Beatrice, and therefore the more incapable of any merely commonplace attachment, not only might very naturally sport their humour on the subject of matrimony, but would of necessity do so, until their own turn came to find an object capable of engaging their affections.

No attentive student of human nature, however, needs be told, that the character, whether male or female, that has been accustomed to jest about marriage in this particular spirit, is one of those which take any affair of genuine love most seriously to heart, and is thereby most effectually cured of that peculiar

species of levity which it has previously displayed. Just so do we find it, in the present instance, with Shakespeare's hero and heroine. The primary solicitude of each is, to remove the uneasiness of the other, by acquainting them that their love is requited; for generosity predominates in both characters, but in that of the heroine especially; whereas, had vanity been ascendant, the first desire, on either side, would have been to enjoy and to parade so signal a triumph. But Benedick, we have seen, concerns himself little about the jests that are likely to be retorted upon him by his friends after his candid avowal of his passion; and as for Beatrice herself, the like consideration seems not once to have occurred to her.

Here, in short, may be seen the first stage in the developement of that essential gravity of the two leading characters in this drama, lying under the superficial levity that masks them at the outset, which we have insisted on as forming the principal business of the piece. Our next paper will be occupied with shewing how the real seriousness of purpose, as well as heartiness of feeling, which belongs both to signior Benedick and the lady Beatrice, is brought out completely in relation to the slander and the vindication of her friend and cousin, the lady Hero. We find this latter portion of our task to be the more indispensable, seeing that the conduct of our heroine in urging her lover to challenge the man whose allegations had dishonoured, in the most ignominious way, her kinswoman and bosom friend—that very conduct which was requisite to disclose all the tenderness, energy, and magnanimity, with which the dramatist has really endowed her—has undergone, even from intelligent critics of her own sex, the most injurious misconstruction.

3.—BENEDICK AND BEATRICE IN LOVE AND MATRIMONY.

[August 24th, 1844.]

As we have hinted already, the right interpretation of our heroine's character depends materially on a clear understanding of the spirit of those two scenes between her and Benedick, which relate to their mutual avowal of love, and their joint determination to call her cousin's accuser to account.

We see them, in the first place, repairing to the nuptials of their respective friends, Count Claudio and the lady Hero, each of them eager, not to exult in the other's humiliation, but to relieve the other's anxiety. The strange turn, however, which the bridal takes, and the tragic circumstances in which it places the intended bride, give a new interest and a fresh complication to the moral relations already subsisting between signior Benedick and the lady Beatrice. Benedick, we must observe, is no more in the secret of the supposed discovery on the part of the prince and count, and the intended repudiation, than Beatrice herself. He may well, then, be utterly confounded at Claudio's first ejaculations before the altar—"Oh, what men dare do! what men may do! what men daily do! not knowing what they do!"—and exclaim in his turn—"How now! Interjections? Why, then, some be of laughing, as ha! ha! ha!" Like the rest of the bystanders, he remains in sheer amazement during the whole of the extraordinary accusation and ignominious rejection, merely once exclaiming, "This looks not like a nuptial,"—until the lady sinks down fainting under the stunning weight and suddenness of the blow. It is now that Beatrice first opens her lips on this occasion; and her very first words shew us that the outrageous imputation against her gentle cousin, her bosom friend, and even

bedfellow, finds not a moment's admittance into her belief:—

Beat. Why, how now, cousin? wherefore sink you down?
Don John. Come, let us go; these things come thus to light, smother her spirits up.
[*Exeunt Don Pedro, Don John, and Claudio.*
Ben. How doth the lady?
Beat. Dead, I think.—Help, uncle!—Hero!—why, Hero!—Uncle!—Signior Benedick!—Friar!
Leon. O fate, take not away thy heavy hand!
Death is the fairest cover for her shame
That may be wish'd for!
Beat. How now, cousin Hero!
Friar. Have comfort, lady.
Leon. Dost thou look up?
Friar. Yea, wherefore should she not?
Leon. Wherefore!—why, doth not every earthly thing
Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny
The story that is printed in her blood? &c.

Since Benedick is not at all in the confidence of his friend the count, and his princely patron, as to their alleged observations respecting the conduct of Hero, we see him, when her accusers have retired from the scene, remaining with perfect propriety, except the officiating ecclesiastic, the only impartial adviser and consoler of the afflicted family. We sometimes find it argued, to the dramatist's prejudice, that the father, in this case, lends too ready credence to the gross charges against his daughter: but it should be carefully observed, that it is no less trustworthy a personage than his own beloved and respected sovereign, this same Pedro of Arragon, who tells Leonato by his own lips—

Upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother, and this grieved count,
Did *see* her, *hear* her, at that hour last night,
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window, &c.

All this solemn asseveration, followed by the drooping silence of the lady, may well excuse that momentary conviction in her father's mind, under which he gives that first passionate expression to his grief—

Do not live, Hero—do not ope thine eyes, &c.—

at the end of which Benedick, though equally confounded, says, to pacify him,—

Sir, sir, be patient:
For my part, I am so attir'd in wonder,
I know not what to say.

Beatrice alone, having better reasons than any of them, falters not in her opinion of her friend—

Oh, on my soul, my cousin is belied!

Hereupon, the sagacity of Benedick suggests to him a question, the answer to which both exemplifies the noble candour of Beatrice herself, and shews us how exclusively her unshaken faith in her cousin's innocence rests upon her intimate knowledge of her character, independently of all external testimony or suspicious circumstance whatsoever. When asked—

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?—

she unhesitatingly admits—

No, truly, not—although, until last night,
I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow;—

and so, enforces the temporary conviction in the mind of Leonato:—

Confirm'd! confirm'd! Oh, that is stronger made,
Which was before barr'd up with ribs of iron!
Would the two princes lie? and Claudio lie?
Who lov'd her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
Wash'd it with tears?——Hence from her—let her die!

But now comes the observing judgment of the sagacious and eloquent friar, in support of Beatrice's positive deduction from her thorough acquaintance with the heart and the spirit of her friend:—

Hear me a little;
For I have only silent been so long,
And given way unto this course of fortune,
By noting of the lady: I have mark'd
A thousand blushing apparitions start
Into her face,—a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness bear away those blushes,—

And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire,
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool,—
Trust not my reading, nor my observation,
Which with experimental seal doth warrant
The tenour of my book,—trust not my age,
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,—
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here,
Under some biting error.

And when, in reply to her father's objection that "she not denies it," and to the friar's question,

Lady, what man is he you are accus'd of?

she has made that more explicit denial of the charge which her first confusion had incapacitated her from doing, the worthy ecclesiastic declares, more confidently than ever,

There is some strange misprision in the princes.

The first ray of light as to the source of such mistake, is immediately thrown by Benedick himself:—

Two of them have the very bent of honour;
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practice of it lives in John the bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of villanies.

And though Leonato still remains in suspense, the balance of probability in his mind is reasonably turned:—

I know not. If they speak but truth of her,
These hands shall tear her. If they wrong her honour,
The proudest of them shall well hear of it,
Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,
Nor age so eat up my invention,
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,
Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,
But they shall find, awak'd in such a kind,
Both strength of limb and policy of mind,
Ability in means, and choice of friends,
To quit me of them throughly.

And when the friar has proposed the expedient of keeping Hero secluded for a while, and representing her as dead, Benedick, still more impressed by the

reverend adviser's arguments, pledges himself to strict concurrence in the scheme:—

> Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you:
> And, though you know my inwardness and love
> Is very much unto the prince and Claudio,
> Yet, by mine honour, I will deal in this
> As secretly and justly as your soul
> Should with your body.

On the other hand, his first words to Beatrice, when they are left alone at the end of this scene—"Lady Beatrice, have you *wept* all this while?"—shew, in a very interesting manner, how completely we have passed from the lighter side of our heroine's character—"pleasant-spirited" and "merry-hearted"—to the exhibition of its graver aspect. And how finely does the whole tone of the ensuing dialogue, where both parties are desiring an affectionate explanation, contrast with their previous colloquies, replete with the spirit of mutual irritation. We see, also, that the injury done to Hero, however distressing in itself, affords a relief to both lovers on the present occasion; since, by presenting to them an unforeseen object of common and pathetic interest, it wonderfully facilitates that reciprocal avowal at which each of them is anxious to arrive, but the approach to which, after the terms on which they have hitherto encountered one another, each may well find embarrassing:—

> *Ben.* Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?
> *Beat.* Yea, and I will weep a while longer.
> *Ben.* I will not desire that.
> *Beat.* You have no reason—I do it freely.
> *Ben.* Surely, I do believe your fair cousin is wronged.
> *Beat.* Ah, how much might the man deserve of me, that would right her!
> *Ben.* Is there any way to shew such friendship?
> *Beat.* A very even way, but no such friend.
> *Ben.* May a man do it?
> *Beat.* It is a man's office, but not yours.

That is, let us observe (since this sentence from the lady is sometimes misconstrued), "It is a man's office, but not the office of a man standing in the friendly

relation that you do to the offending parties." Benedick knows well the import of this answer; and therefore, to remove the objection, opens his heart at once, by telling her, "I do love nothing in the world so well as you — is not that strange?" We would willingly rest the whole interpretation of our heroine's character, as regards its capability of generous and lasting affection, upon the spirit of the following piece of dialogue. Coquetry, or vanity of any sort, would have dictated to her a course diametrically opposite to the frank though modest manner in which she meets her lover's declaration:—

Ben. I do love nothing in the world so well as you—is not that strange?

Beat. As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say, I love nothing so well as you.——But believe me not—and yet I lie not.—I confess nothing—nor I deny nothing.——I am sorry for my cousin!

Ben. By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

Beat. Do not swear by it and eat it.

Ben. I will swear by it, that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says, I love not you.

Beat. Will you not eat your word?

Ben. With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest, I love thee.

Beat. Why, then, God forgive me!—

Ben. What offence, sweet Beatrice?

Beat. You have stayed me in a happy hour—I was about to protest I loved you.

Ben. And do it with all thy heart.

Beat. I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest!

After this bounding forward of her heart, as it were, to meet the earnest offer of his own, Benedick may well exclaim so eagerly, "Come, bid me do anything for thee!"—little as he is prepared for the peremptory reply, "Kill Claudio." He is, in fact, now called upon to choose at once between his friendship and his love; for Beatrice's intellect, no less than her heart, dictates to her that this, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, is the proper test of his affection; and she therefore proceeds unflinchingly to apply it:—

Ben. Come, bid me do anything for thee!

Beat. Kill Claudio.

Ben. Ha! not for the wide world!

Beat. You kill *me*, to deny it.—Farewell.

Ben. Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

Beat. I am gone, though I am here. There is no love in you.——Nay, I pray you, let me go.

Ben. Beatrice——

Beat. In faith, I will go.

Ben. We'll be friends first.

Beat. You dare easier be friends with me, than fight with mine enemy.

Ben. Is Claudio thine enemy?

Beat. Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman?——Oh, that I were a man!——What! bear her in hand until they come to take hands—and then, with public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour——O God! that I were a man!—I would eat his heart in the market-place!

Ben. Hear me, Beatrice——

Beat. Talk with a man out at a window?—a proper saying!

Ben. Nay, but Beatrice——

Beat. Sweet Hero!—she is wronged—she is slandered—she is undone!

Ben. Beat——

Beat. Princes and counties!—Surely, a princely testimony! a goodly count-confect!—a sweet gallant, surely!——Oh, that I were a man, for his sake!—or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into courtesies,—valour into compliments,—and men are only turned into tongues—and trim ones, too!—He is now as valiant as Hercules, that only tells a lie and swears it! I cannot be a man with wishing—therefore I will die a woman with grieving! [*Going.*

Ben. Tarry, good Beatrice!—By this hand, I love thee!

Beat. Use it for my love some other way than swearing by it.

Ben. Think you in your soul the count Claudio hath wronged Hero?

Beat. Yea, as sure as I have a thought, or a soul!

Ben. Enough—I am engaged—I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so leave you.——By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account!——As you hear of me, so think of me.——Go, comfort your cousin.—I must say she is dead.——And so, farewell.

Respecting this very significant passage, Mrs. Jameson makes the mistake of ascribing Beatrice's persevering incitement of her lover to challenge her friend's accuser—not to that earnest desire for her in-

jured cousin's vindication in the only practicable way, which really inspires it—but merely to the impulses of "a haughty, excitable, and violent temper." "Her indignation," proceeds the fair critic, "and the eagerness with which she hungers and thirsts after revenge, are, like the rest of her character, open, ardent, impetuous, but not deep or implacable. When she bursts into that outrageous speech, 'Is he not approved in the height a villain,' &c. — and when she commands her lover, as the first proof of his affection, to 'Kill Claudio,'—the very consciousness of the exaggeration—of the contrast between the real goodnature of Beatrice and the fierce tenor of her language, keeps alive the comic effect, mingling the ludicrous with the serious."

But it is not *revenge* for herself,—it is *justice, reparation* to her beloved and calumniated cousin,—that our heroine is here pursuing. It is not, therefore, implacability of resentment that is in question, but immutability of resolution to enforce redress—which unshaken determination she most amply and most reasonably evinces. Benedick, on the other hand, finds himself in a dilemma from which there is no honourable escape, except by formally espousing his mistress's quarrel against his friend on behalf of her cousin's honour. He becomes thus committed the moment that he makes to the lady in person that solemn protestation of his affection which we have cited above. Beatrice, heartbroken at her "sweet Hero's" wrong and affliction, argues most logically and truly, that if her lover's protestation be sincere, he *must*, were it at the cost of all other friendship in the world, shew himself that champion of her own peace, her cousin's fame, and her family's reputation, which he has constituted himself by that very avowal. So that the interests of her love, no less than of her friendship, are concerned in pressing upon him this test of the seriousness of his attachment.

Mrs. Jameson, we see, finds it "outrageous" that she should say of Claudio, "Is he not approved in the

height a villain," &c. But herein, Beatrice only anticipates the judgment on the matter, which, in the following scene between Leonato and his brother Antonio, we find adopted by the gravest and sagest members of her family:—

> *Ant.* Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself;
> Make those that do offend you, suffer too.
> *Leon.* There thou speak'st reason; nay, I will do so;
> My soul doth tell me, Hero is belied;
> And that shall Claudio know, so shall the prince,
> And all of them that thus dishonour her.

What means, indeed, hitherto, has any one of Hero's relatives, to single out an individual author of her defamation? Believing now religiously in her innocence,—if they, a family of the highest name, rank, and character, will not do the meanness most impossible to such persons, of sitting down quietly under such ignominious wrong,—if they will seek redress at all,—what can they do but, in the first place, call to account the man immediately responsible—the ostensibly principal accuser and injurer? Accordingly, we find Hero's father and her uncle addressing their demand of satisfaction primarily and pointedly to Claudio, in terms little more measured than those of Beatrice herself:—

> *Leon.* Know, Claudio, to thy head,
> Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me,
> That I am forc'd to lay my reverence by;
> And, with grey hairs, and bruise of many days,
> Do challenge thee to trial of a man.
> I say, thou hast belied mine innocent child;
> Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart;
> And she lies buried with her ancestors,
> Oh, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
> Save this of hers, fram'd by thy villany!
> *Claud.* My villany?
> *Leon.* Thine, Claudio—thine, I say.

And the language of Antonio's anger, on the same occasion, in spite of his reverend years, quite matches that of Beatrice in its alleged "outrageousness":—

God knows, I lov'd my niece;
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains;
That dare as well answer a man, indeed,
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue;
Boys, apes, braggarts, jacks, milksops!

. . . . .

Scambling, out-facing, fashion-mongering boys,
That lie, and cog, and flout,—deprave and slander,—
Go antic'ly, and shew an outward hideousness,—
And speak off half-a-dozen dangerous words,
How they might hurt their enemies—if they durst;—
And this is all!

When we contemplate this animated picture of affliction and provocation, possessing a whole noble family, and seeking relief in the only course that seems open towards reparation of such bitter injury, it seems really extraordinary that a female critic of Mrs. Jameson's discernment should tell us, respecting our heroine's share in these sufferings and this desire of redress, that "our consciousness of the contrast between the real good-nature of Beatrice and the fierce tenor of her language, keeps alive the *comic* effect, mingling the *ludicrous* with the serious." How, on such an occasion, was her "good-nature" to have any place as regards the destroyer of her cousin's honour and happiness? It is, indeed, her best nature of all—her generously affectionate feeling for her gentle and afflicted cousin—that absolutely dictates the "fierce tenor of her language," which, so far from having anything in it really "comic" or "ludicrous," has an effect the more serious, the more tragic, for its very contrast with the joyous-hearted effusions of her earlier and happier moments.

This strange overlooking of the true, deep, and disinterested motive which makes Beatrice urge her lover to the hostile proceeding against Claudio, betrays the authoress of the 'Characteristics' into a yet more serious detraction from the generosity of this heroine, as well as from the good sense and manliness of the hero. Respecting this same declaration scene, she tells us:—

"Here, again, the dominion rests with Beatrice, and she appears in a less amiable light than her lover. Benedick surrenders his whole heart to her and to his new passion. The revulsion of feeling even causes it to overflow in an excess of fondness; but with Beatrice, temper has still the mastery. The affection of Benedick induces him to challenge his intimate friend for her sake, but the affection of Beatrice does not prevent her from risking the life of her lover."*

We have sufficiently shown already, that it is not "temper," as Mrs. Jameson phrases it, but just principle and generous feeling combined, that actuate the heroine to place her lover in this hostile position towards her cousin's traducer, whom he can no longer, consistently with his protestations to herself, consider as his friend. The moment *before* he made these solemn professions, she had told him respecting the righting of her cousin's wrong, "It is a man's office, but not yours." The moment *after* he has made them, she tells him what is equivalent to saying, "It is *now* your office, beyond all other men,"—especially since, according to all appearance, the only male members of the family in the way, to take up the quarrel, are the aged father and uncle, Leonato and Antonio.

But it is the fair critic's imputation against Beatrice's affection, that it "does not prevent her from risking the life of her lover," which here demands especial notice. The writer, in this instance, has not only overlooked that affection of Beatrice for her cousin which is the deepest impulse of her heart; but has made a more important oversight still, in imagining that her instigation of Benedick on this occasion compromises the generosity of her affection towards *him*. On the contrary, this is the most convincing proof of its truth and worthiness. As a man of honour, adopting Beatrice's conviction of Hero's innocence, Benedick is no longer at liberty to decline the office of its champion; and this drama, let us observe, is laid in the time when, however it may be now-a-days, a woman of spirit as well as tenderness

* Second Edition, vol. i. p. 136.

would have shrunk from the remotest idea of requiting her lover in so mean a sense, as to risk his honour for fear of risking his life. The more dearly she loved him, the more she loved his honour, as the dearest part of him to a woman worthy of his affection. Truly, this and other degenerate notions about feminine attachment which continually meet our eye, especially as regards the interpretation of Shakespeare's characters, are enough to make one exclaim, not only that the days of chivalry are gone, but that the very memory of their noblest ideas and feelings must have departed also.

Moreover, this same critical mistake as to the heroine's motives, would lower the hero, on this occasion, from the conscious and deliberate agent of a generous redress, to the merely blind and weak tool of his mistress's individual resentment—a debasement little to be looked for in the man whom we have heard his royal patron pronouncing to be "of a noble strain, of approved valour, and confirmed honesty." Nor let us forget that the same good authority has informed us,—"And in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise; for either he avoids them with great discretion, or undertakes them with a most christian-like fear." This, by-the-by, was said in the arbour scene, where our hero's friends little anticipated that the success of their humorous plot was to bring upon themselves so signal a specimen of his wisdom "in the managing of quarrels." As the climax of earnest purpose, as well as generous feeling, in Beatrice's character, appears in the scene where she persuades her lover to the challenge, so the full seriousness of Benedick's is finally brought out in that where he delivers it—the more so by the bold contrast of his language here—speaking, to borrow his own phrase, "plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier"—with that bantering tone which his late friends the prince and count, finding themselves "high-proof melancholy," can less than ever help indulging. Now, in short, it is that Beatrice

and he stand fairly revealed to us as the most deeply tragic personages of the piece.

Then, again, follows the scene which exhibits to us yet more decidedly that steadiness of generous purpose as well as feeling in the heroine, which, we see, has been too much mistaken for mere angry wilfulness:—

Ben. Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I called thee?
Beat. Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.
Ben. Oh, stay but till then!
Beat. Then is spoken; fare you well now;—and yet, ere I go, let me go with that I came for, which is, with knowing what hath passed between you and Claudio.
Ben. Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

But she is not yet assured of the fact of the challenge:—

Beat. Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome; therefore I will depart unkissed.
Ben. Thou hast frighted the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes my challenge; and either I must shortly hear from him, or I will subscribe him a coward.

And now the lady is at liberty to indulge through the rest of the scene, though still in her own sportive way, her sentiments of love and gratitude:—

Ben. And, I pray thee now, tell me, for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?
Beat. For them all together; which maintain so politic a state of evil, that they will not permit any good part to intermingle with them. But for which of my *good* parts did you first suffer love for me?
Ben. Suffer love—a good epithet! I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.
Beat. In spite of your heart, I think. Alas! poor heart! If you spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours; for I will never love that which my friend hates.
Ben. Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

Mrs. Jameson, amongst others, makes the very essential mistake of interpreting this last sentence of Benedick's as an admission that he and his mistress cannot even make love without wrangling,—and hence infers, naturally enough, that they can hardly be ex-

pected to live harmoniously after marriage. But let any attentive observer well consider those very words of Beatrice immediately preceding, which draw this remark from her lover. Are they not a most intelligible effusion of the frankest and most grateful affection, towards the man who had so promptly and decisively undertaken the championship of her friend,—from the woman who, just before his avowal to herself, had so ardently exclaimed in relation to her fair cousin's wrong, "Ah, how much might the man deserve of me, that would right her!"—an effusion which, to a man of Benedick's character, is made doubly delightful by the piquant veil of pleasantry under which it is conveyed. Shakespeare knew both mankind and womankind too well, not to know how much more precious, to a man of lively intelligence, is the tenderness of a woman who possesses vivacious intellect besides, than that of a woman *all* tenderness. To such a pair, the "wooing peaceably," in the sense in which Benedick really uses the word—that is, sentimentally, in the languishing sense—would have been mere wearisome insipidity. And for them to live together, in the like sense, "peaceably" after marriage, would assuredly be more wearisome still. Possessing each that warm, sound, and generous heart which we have seen them so freely exhibit and exchange, this same sportive encounter of their wits which must ever continue between them, is precisely the thing that will keep them in good humour with each other.

Such is manifestly the constant anticipation of their common friends, as we find in the subsequent scenes, when they are once more left at leisure to entertain the subject, by that disclosure of Don John's villanous contrivance which finally restores the affair of Hero and her lover to its former happy and prosperous position.

Yet we find Mrs. Jameson, in opposition to the evident meaning of the dramatist, closing her account of Beatrice with a considerably sinister augury as to

the amount of domestic happiness that she is to bestow upon her husband:—

"On the whole," says she, "we dismiss Benedick and Beatrice to their matrimonial bonds, rather with a sense of amusement, than a feeling of congratulation or sympathy; rather with an acknowledgment that they are well-matched, and worthy of each other, than with any well-founded expectation of their domestic tranquillity. If, as Benedick asserts, they are both 'too wise to woo peaceably,' it may be added, that both are too wise, too witty, and too wilful, to live peaceably together. We have some misgivings about Beatrice—some apprehensions that poor Benedick will not escape the 'predestinate scratched face' which he had foretold to him who should win and wear this quick-witted and pleasant-spirited lady. Yet when we recollect that to the wit and imperious temper of Beatrice is united a magnanimity of spirit which would naturally place her far above all selfishness, and all paltry struggles for power,—when we perceive, in the midst of her sarcastic levity and volubility of tongue, so much of generous affection, and such a high sense of female virtue and honour, we *are inclined to hope the best.* We think it possible that though the gentleman may now and then swear, and the lady scold, the native good-humour of the one, the really fine understanding of the other, and the value they so evidently attach to each other's esteem, will ensure them a tolerable portion of domestic felicity,—and in this hope we leave them."

A *tolerable* portion of domestic felicity, indeed!—what a fate, for two such people!—even as Dogberry saith, "most tolerable, and not to be endured!" Mr. Campbell is more merciful—he would rescue them from such intolerably tolerable bliss. In his late prefatory "Remarks,"* after complimenting Beatrice as "a disagreeable female character," "a tartar, by Shakspeare's own showing," &c., he delivers over her and her bridegroom the following nuptial benediction:—

"The marriage of the marriage-hating Benedick and the furiously anti-nuptial Beatrice, is brought about by a trick. Their friends contrive to deceive them into a belief that they love each other; and partly by vanity, partly by a mutual affection which had been disguised under the bickerings of their wit, they have their hands joined, and the consolations of religion are administered, by the priest who marries them, to the unhappy

* See Moxon's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays.

sufferers. Mrs. Jameson, in her Characters of Shakspeare's women, concludes with hoping that Beatrice will live happy with Benedick; but I have no such hope; and my final anticipation in reading the play is, the certainty that Beatrice will provoke her Benedick to give her much and just conjugal castigation. She is an odious woman. Her own cousin says of her,

Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes, &c.

I once knew such a pair; the lady was a perfect Beatrice; she railed hypocritically at wedlock before her marriage, and with bitter sincerity after it. She and her Benedick now live apart, but with entire reciprocity of sentiments, each devoutly wishing that the other may soon pass into a better world."

That any of our critic's married friends should be living so very uncomfortably, we are bound sincerely to regret; but it still more behoves us to protest once more, definitively and decidedly, against so perverted a view of this heroine's character, and so grave an imputation as this passage involves, against the genius of Shakespeare—that, in the very zenith of his dramatic and poetic powers, he should have brought so sound-hearted and vigorous as well as "pleasant-spirited" a play to such a "lame and impotent conclusion."

Nor can we close this argument without calling attention to one other significant indication, which seems to have escaped the apprehension of the critics, both male and female.

Already we have more than once found occasion to remark the choice invention or selection of *names* employed by Shakespeare to distinguish his most original personages. We deem the present instance to be no exception to his general practice in this respect. And we recommend it to all who are disposed to think that he himself, in winding up his drama, seriously contemplated the "predestinate scratched face," to consider that it would be exceedingly unlike his own instinctive and unvarying logical consistency, that he should have chosen to give the reverend name of *Benedictus*, or *the blessed*, to the hero upon whom the scratching in question was to be inflicted,—and that of *Beatrice*—the great poetic name of *Beatrice*, or *the blesser*—to the heroine who was destined to inflict it.

4.—ACTING OF THE CHARACTER OF BEATRICE.

[May 18th, 1847.]

HERE, again, the stage may fairly be held responsible for much of the prevailing critical misconception. The modern theatrical Beatrice has commonly exhibited herself either as a hoyden, or a vixen, or that still more repulsive personage, a compound of the two. But the Beatrice of Shakespeare, we have seen, is the high-bred, high-spirited, and generous-hearted lady of the later chivalric time. How, then, shall she be most adequately embodied on the stage?

Such, let us here observe, is the thorough individuality of all Shakespeare's heroines — notwithstanding all the essential womanhood which forms the basis of character in each—that were it possible to have, for each new character, a particular performer with special individual qualifications for that part above all others,—such multiplicity of actresses, no doubt, would most completely realize a perfect ideal of feminine Shakespearian personation. But seeing that histrionic resources such as here imagined, are hardly conceivable in even the most prosperous state that any stage can ever attain,—and are peculiarly in contrast with the poverty of the British theatre at present,—we are left to choose between having the character of Beatrice, amongst others, assumed by a *comic* actress in the commonplace acceptation, or by an artist capable of embodying the still higher ideals of Shakespearian womanhood.

Now, in the appreciation of character, any more than in mathematics, *the lesser cannot comprehend the greater.* While, therefore, it is quite impossible for the merely comic actress to reach the conception, and much more the expression, of any one of Shakespeare's peculiarly ideal women,—it is hardly more

practicable for her to rise to the nobility of spirit, as well as refinement of manner, which should not only appear in the generously impassioned passages of a character like Beatrice, but should lend grace and delicacy to her most exuberant effusions of humorous or sarcastic merriment.

On the contrary, it *is* possible for the artist capable of embodying the more ideal conception, to descend (for it *is* descending, even in Shakespeare) to the personation of a real-life character, though still of the noblest order. The actress really capable of a Rosalind, *can* conceive of a Beatrice, and *can* express her truly as well as adequately.

That concluding Shakespearian season at Drury-Lane, to which we have already adverted as affording a perfect illustration of the contrast between the commonplace and the ideal Rosalind,* presented, in the persons of the very same performers, an exactly parallel contrast between the vulgarized and the genuine impersonation of Beatrice. On the former of these two performances, we shall enter into no detail. It was simply, we repeat, the traditionally vulgar stage conception of the part, very coarsely rendered. In this instance, to seek to instruct the artist were as unavailing, as to reproach her would be unjust: for here, again, the fault, if any, lay with the manager, who should have understood Shakespeare better than to have caused or permitted her to attempt the character at all.

But respecting the contrasting personation which was presented to the London public during the latter nights of the same season, we must point out the fine illustration which it afforded of the general position we have stated above—that the high ideal artist can successfully adapt herself to a character like this, although the commonplace performer can never rise to its elevation. As for details in this instance, we prefer citing a passage or two from critical notices of a later date, which, though provincial, are highly in-

* See, in this volume, pages 236—240.

telligent; and while they corroborate our own general testimony, serve to place in a striking light the importance of histrionic aid like this, in restoring the full and true intelligence, enjoyment, and appreciation of Shakespeare. Only a familiarity with the living embodiment of the elegant and heroic as well as pleasant-spirited Beatrice, can thoroughly banish from the public mind that medley of associations which has so long possessed it—made up, as we have said, from the vixen on the one hand, and the hoyden on the other, which, though in varying proportions, the modern stage has constantly set before it.

'The Manchester Courier', then, of Saturday, May 9th, 1846, speaking of Miss Helen Faucit's personation of Beatrice on the previous Thursday, says:—"It was a performance of rare beauty, though differing entirely both in conception and developement from any Beatrice we have seen for some years back. It is less buoyant, less boisterous, if the terms may be applied to the exuberance of feeling which is generally thrown into the part by modern actresses; it has not the hearty laugh of Mrs. Jordan, that made the listener doubt if such a woman could be ever unhappy; nor the biting sarcasm and fire-eating of others we could name, who stand high in the list of the approved. Yet to those who have read Shakespeare and made him a study, it must have been delightful to perceive how beautifully she made Beatrice accord with the almost universal sentiment of woman's character as pourtrayed by the great writer. In all her mirth, there was still refinement and rare delicacy," &c.

But if this lady's Beatrice has not the laugh of Mrs. Jordan, it wants not the more refined though exuberant joyousness of Shakespeare's heroine. On this head, the testimony of 'The Liverpool Journal', dated but a week earlier (May 2nd), is remarkable. After opening his notice by saying—"It was with much misgiving we heard the play announced: we doubted Miss Faucit's versatility, and from what we

had seen were apprehensive that she was deficient in that elastic and buoyant spirit which the character demands,"—the writer continues;—"We were, however, never more agreeably disappointed. Miss Faucit's Beatrice is a creature o'erflowing with joyousness—raillery itself being in her nothing more than an excess of animal spirits, tempered by passing through a soul of goodness." As, again, yet more recently, 'The Newcastle Courant', of Friday, April 30th, 1847, speaking of this lady's performance there on the previous Tuesday, tells us—"The playfulness and sarcastic humour of Beatrice, were given with lady-like grace and girlish buoyancy."

It is, indeed, one of the things most marvellous to any fresh student of this actress's personations, to discover that the very being who at one moment had seemed born to breathe the deepest soul of mournful or heroic tragedy, could at the next become a seemingly exhaustless fountain of spontaneous and delicious cheerfulness—that not only do we find a plaintive Imogen thus magically transmuted into a buoyant Rosalind in all the dewy-fragrant sunshine of her spirit,—but even the most awfully thrilling Lady Macbeth herself, into the most genuinely laughing Beatrice!

Yet all this only argues—but argues incontrovertibly—the existence in the artist herself—rare in any time, and precious in the present—of that *whole* rich essence of poetic womanhood of which Shakespeare had such perfect and peculiar intuition.

VII.

CHARACTERS IN 'ROMEO AND JULIET.'

[September 1st, 1845.]

I.—INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

FEW plays more clearly illustrate the essentially defective state of our Shakespearian interpretation, both in criticism and on the stage, than the one which gives title to the present essay. The very mainspring of the tragic action and the tragic interest in the "Romeo and Juliet" is continually mistaken—a mistake involving, we shall see, a radical misunderstanding of Shakespeare's mode of conceiving and method of combining the leading elements of tragedy in general. In spite of all the diligent and elaborate care which, in this instance, the dramatist has taken to shew, both to hearer and to reader, that the violent sorrows and calamitous end of his "pair of star-crossed lovers" are brought upon them by causes quite independent of any defect of character or impropriety of conduct in both or either of them,—yet we find the piece continually talked and written about as if the misfortunes of the hero and heroine were produced in the main by their own "fault," or "rashness," or "imprudence,"—to the utter oblivion or disregard, in the mind of the verbal or literary critic, of that ever

adverse destiny—those "inauspicious stars"—of which Romeo is so repeatedly made conscious that he bears the inevitable "yoke."

But it was from no such equivocal germ as this, that Shakespeare's genius ever developed a great ideal tragedy,—nor that any genius ever did or ever will unfold one. In Shakespeare, especially, whenever a hero's calamities are to be incurred by his own fault, the character is made one of violent disproportion, both mentally and morally,—producing either the inordinate wickedness of a Macbeth or an Iago, or the inordinate folly of a Timon or a Lear. When, on the contrary, the hero is to be exhibited before us as the victim of ill-fortune, and so to demand our pity in the highest and the purest sense, the character is ever most carefully compounded as one of ideal dignity and harmony. Of Shakespeare's application of this latter principle, 'Hamlet' is the master example of all; but next to 'Hamlet,' the 'Romeo and Juliet' is one of the most remarkable.

In a former paper,* we have shown how that habitually degrading misinterpretation of Shakespeare which has descended to us from the most disgraceful period of English history, whether in politics, in morals, or in taste, still daily *inverts*, on our stage and in our criticism, the relation which the poet has established between the character and the fortune of Macbeth. We have shown how Shakespeare has made the intensely selfish, cowardly, and remorseless ambition of that hero, plunge him headlong from the highest summit of reputation and prosperity to the lowest depth of calamity and execration,—the prescience of the weird sisters, and the moral firmness of his wife—things in themselves good or indifferent—being converted by himself into helps toward the fulfilment of his own evil purpose, gratuitously and spontaneously conceived. We have also shown how our critics and our actors, absolutely *reversing* this relation, persist in holding up to us Macbeth as an

* See 'Characters in Macbeth,' pp. 109 to 198 of this volume.

inherently *good* and *feeling* man, for whom the poet claims our *pity*, as the victim of wicked instigations in which earth and hell are combined against him. And we have indicated the deep moral mischievousness of this theatrical and critical perversion.

Now, it is remarkable, that in the acting and the criticism of 'Hamlet,' an analogous perversion has taken place,—though, from the opposite nature of the subject, operating exactly in an inverse direction. Against Hamlet, in Shakespeare, the evil practices of earth, the suggestions of hell, and the enmity of Fortune, are literally and truly combined, to perplex and to crush him; but the just harmony of his mental constitution,

> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man,

bears it out against

> The slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune,—

beaten and shattered indeed, and finally broken, but *unswerving* to the last. And yet, up to this very hour, cannot the critics of this Shakespearian masterpiece—including even Goethe, and Schlegel, and Coleridge—notwithstanding that its hero is

> benetted round with villanies,

and has a preternatural embarrassment of the most horrible kind superadded—find any adequate source of his calamities, but in what they represent as the "morbid" disproportion of his own character—his "excess" of reflection and imagination—his "deficiency" of passion and of will. We may, ere long, find occasion to shew, that Hamlet's consciousness of "inauspicious stars," so continually recurring throughout the piece, is as well-grounded as that of Romeo himself, and that under *their* influence *alone* does he sink,—that with sensibility and imagination,—with judgment and reflection,—with passion and will,—with sympathy and self-devotion,—and with "the hand to dare," no less than "the will to do,"—Shakespeare

has studiously endowed him,—each in an ideally exalted degree, and all harmoniously combined into a character of perfect ideal strength and beauty.

Meanwhile, those to whom such an announcement may seem startling, notwithstanding our recent demonstration in the instance of 'Macbeth,' how possible it is for essential misunderstandings of this most profound of artists to establish themselves under the most respectable critical names,—may be somewhat prepared for the like demonstration in the case of 'Hamlet' by tracing with us, in the following pages, that strictly analogous misinterpretation of 'Romeo and Juliet' which, as indicated at the opening of this essay, our current criticism and acting concur to uphold.

Even Coleridge* simply tells us, concerning Romeo's fortunes, that "his change of passion, his sudden marriage, and his rash death, are all the effects of youth." And respecting those of Juliet, the authoress of the 'Characteristics of Women,' who has written so many pages upon this heroine, embodies the prevalent misconception in her concluding paragraph:—

"With all this immense capacity of affection and imagination there is a deficiency of reflection and of moral energy, arising from previous habit and education; and the action of the drama, while it serves to develope the character, appears but its natural and necessary result. 'Le mystère de l'existence,' said Madame de Staël to her daughter, 'c'est le rapport de nos erreurs avec nos peines.'" †

* 'Characteristics of Shakspeare's Dramas,' in Coleridge's 'Literary Remains,' 8vo. vol. ii. p. 77.

† 'Characteristics,' &c.—3rd edit.—vol. i. p. 203. It seems due to Madame de Staël, to point out that she is not at all responsible for this application of her general remark. She says nothing of the kind regarding Juliet, though she speaks of her at considerable length in the second chapter of the seventh book of her 'Corinne.' Not merely her general treatment of the character in those pages, but the very fact of her selecting it for personation by her own heroine under those peculiar circumstances, shews that she conceived the individuality of Juliet as more exalted and vigorous, more nobly womanly, as well as richly poetical, than it appears in Mrs. Jameson's appreciation.

Included under this general misconception is another critical and popular mistake—the notion that Shakespeare, in this piece, reads a lesson to youth against imprudently disregarding, in the affair of marriage, the authority, or the consent, or the knowledge, of their parents. It is, indeed, certain that Shakespeare, like every greatly wise man—whether poet, or philosopher, or both—was deeply impressed with the importance, to social welfare, of a due relation being preserved, in this matter, between filial choice and parental control. No writer of fiction has more impressively recommended the utmost deference, on such occasions, to parental counsel, kindly and disinterestedly administered; but neither was any one ever more alive to the worse than irreligion, the black impiety, as well as unnatural cruelty, committed by such parents as, to gratify their own selfish ambition or wilful caprice, will force their children to belie their hearts and perjure their souls in the face of heaven, by calling God to witness the sincerity of a union which their feelings reject. Our dramatist was not slow to read the former kind of lessons; they are abundant in his works; but in the present instance, it is to parents, and to fathers especially, that the moral is applicable, which results from the conduct of the heroine and *her* parents respectively. Nevertheless, the contrary notion as to the poet's intention is so firmly established, that even prudent matrons of rank have taken their girls to witness the performance of this play, as a warning against the dangers attendant on a clandestine union.

Closely connected, again, with the commonplace light in which this drama has been regarded, as a mere story of an imprudent love affair between two *interesting* young people, is the notion that Shakespeare has exhibited in these lovers, and in Juliet more especially, a temperament of peculiarly Italian *vehemence;* and this *impetuosity* of their southern blood is held to account for what we find continually talked of by the critics as the "precipitancy" of their marriage, and the "rashness" of their suicide.

In opposition to these prevalent views of the matter, we must now proceed to shew that Shakespeare, in this piece, has made it his business to idealize poetically, under the dramatic form, the power and the triumph of Love, in its largest and noblest sense—not merely Love as existing in a particular race or climate, but the sovereign passion of humanity at large, as exhibiting itself in the most exquisitely organized individuals.

Verona, Giulietta, and Romeo, as they appear in the Italian legend, have furnished to his drama simply "a local habitation and a name." The personages of his hero and heroine, we repeat, are ideal in the largest acceptation—in the *human*, or at least the *European*, not merely the *Italian* sense. This was indispensable to produce completely the twofold development which we trace in the progress of the piece,—that sympathetic love is the most rapid and powerful agent in drawing forth the energies of the individual,—and that such union of hearts, when once perfected, has a force, beyond all other moral power, to resist the direst assaults of Fortune—even as the firm-set Roman arch itself, which external violence may shatter, but can never cause to swerve.

2.—ROMEO BEFORE HIS MEETING WITH JULIET.

THE supremely poetical constitution of heart and mind, as well as ideal beauty of person, in both Juliet and Romeo, are the more effectively brought home to us by introducing them, as the dramatist has done, in immediate contrast with the lively picture of vulgar discord between the rival families, and their adherents, which opens the play. When the comic bravadoes between the servants of the Capulet and the Montague,

have been followed by the clashing of swords between the kinsmen of the

Two households, both alike in dignity,—

the interference of the disturbed and indignant citizens, —the rushing of old Montague and Capulet themselves upon the scene,—and finally by "the sentence of their moved prince,"—the first mention of Romeo is marked by a sudden and pleasing transition from the hitherto harsh and prosaic tone of the dialogue, to an easy flow both of imagery and of diction, as if the gentle harmony in the spirit of the absent hero, who is now the theme of their discourse, had communicated a sweetness of modulation even to the thoughts and language of the speakers, his tender parents and his affectionate cousin:—

Lady Montague. Oh, where is Romeo!—saw you him to-day?
Right glad am I, he was not at this fray.
Benvolio. Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun
Peer'd forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad;
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore,
That westward rooteth from the city's side,
So early walking did I see your son:
Towards him I made; but he was 'ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood:
I, measuring his affections by my own,
That most are busied when they are most alone,
Pursued my humour, not pursuing his,
And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me.
Montague. Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs:
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself;
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial night:
Black and portentous must this humour prove,
Unless good counsel may the cause remove.
Ben. My noble uncle, do you know the cause?
Mon. I neither know it nor can learn of him.

Ben. Have you impórtun'd him by any means?
Mon. Both by myself, and many other friends:
But he, his own affections' counsellor,
Is to himself—I will not say, how true—
But to himself so secret and so close,
So far from sounding and discovery,
As is the bud bit with an envious worm,
Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun.—
Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow,
We would as willingly give cure, as know.—
Ben. See, where he comes.—So please you, step aside;
I'll know his grievance, or be much denied.
Mon. I would, thou wert so happy, by thy stay,
To hear true shrift.—Come, madam, let's away.

This is an exquisitely appropriate prelude to the first introduction of Romeo himself to our eyes and ears—his supremely sensitive and imaginative nature under all the fanciful influence of a first, youthful, and unrequited passion:—

Ben. Good morrow, cousin.
Romeo. Is the day so young?
Ben. But new struck nine.
Rom. Ah me! sad hours seem long.——
Was that my father, that went hence so fast?
Ben. It was.—What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?
Rom. Not having that which having makes them short.
Ben. In love?
Rom. Out—
Ben. Of love?
Rom. Out of her favour, where I am in love.
Ben. Alas, that Love, so gentle in his view,
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!
Rom. Alas, that Love, whose view is muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!——
Where shall we dine?——Oh me!—— What fray was here?
Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.—
Here's much to do with hate, but more with love!—
Why then,—O brawling love! O loving hate!
O anything, of nothing first create!
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead! bright smoke! cold fire! sick health!
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!—
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.——
Dost thou not laugh?
Ben. No, coz, I rather weep.

Rom. Good heart, at what?
Ben. At thy good heart's oppression.
Rom. Why, such is love's transgression.—
Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast;
Which thou wilt propagate, to have it prest
With more of thine: this love, that thou hast shown,
Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.——
Love is a smoke, rais'd with the fume of sighs;
Being purg'd, a fire, sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Being vex'd, a sea, nourish'd with lovers' tears.—
What is it else?—a madness most discreet,
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.——
Farewell, my coz.
Ben. Soft—I will go along;
An if you leave me so, you do me wrong.
Rom. Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here;
This is not Romeo—he's some other where.
Ben. Tell me in sadness, who she is you love.
Rom. What, shall I groan, and tell thee?
Ben. Groan?—why, no;
But sadly tell me who.
Rom. Bid a sick man in sadness make his will—
Ah, word ill urg'd to one that is so ill!—
In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.
Ben. I aim'd so near, when I suppos'd you lov'd.
Rom. A right good marksman!—And she's fair I love.
Ben. A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.
Rom. Well, in that hit you miss; she'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit;
And, in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,
From Love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd:
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.
Oh, she is rich in beauty—only poor,
That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store.
Ben. Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?
Rom. She hath—and in that sparing makes huge waste;
For beauty, starv'd with her severity,
Cuts beauty off from all posterity.
She is too fair, too wise—too wisely fair—
To merit bliss by making me despair:
She hath forsworn to love; and in that vow
Do I live dead, that live to tell it now!
Ben. Be rul'd by me—forget to think of her.
Rom. O, teach me how I should forget to think.
Ben. By giving liberty unto thine eyes;
Examine other beauties.
Rom. 'Tis the way

To call hers, exquisite, in question more:
These happy masks, that kiss fair ladies' brows,
Being black, put us in mind they hide the fair:
He that is strucken blind, cannot forget
The precious treasure of his eyesight lost:
Shew me a mistress that is passing fair—
What doth her beauty serve, but as a note,
Where I may read who pass'd that passing fair?——
Farewell—thou canst not teach me to forget.
Ben. I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt.

Mrs. Jameson, in her elaborate account of the character of Juliet, commits the fundamental error of confounding this first, unrequited passion of Romeo's, which excites for him such deep anxiety in the breasts of his parents and his cousin, with one of the mere affectations belonging to chivalric manners:—

"We must remember," says she, "that in those times every young cavalier of any distinction devoted himself, at his first entrance into the world, to the service of some fair lady, who was selected to be his fancy's queen: and the more rigorous the beauty, and the more hopeless the love, the more honourable the slavery. To go about 'metamorphosed by a mistress,' as Speed humorously expresses it,—to maintain her supremacy in charms at the sword's point; to sigh; to walk with folded arms; to be negligent and melancholy, and to show a careless desolation, was the fashion of the day. The Surreys, the Sydneys, the Bayards, the Herberts, of the time—all those who were the mirrors 'in which the noble youth did dress themselves,' were of this fantastic school of gallantry—the last remains of the age of chivalry; and it was especially prevalent in Italy. Shakspeare has ridiculed it in many places with exquisite humour; but he wished to show us that it has its serious as well as its comic aspect. Romeo, then, is introduced to us, with perfect truth of costume, as the thrall of a dreaming, fanciful passion for the scornful Rosaline, who had forsworn to love; and on her charms and coldness, and on the power of love generally, he descants to his companions in pretty phrases, quite in the style and taste of the day."*

If this view of the nature of Romeo's unrequited passion were just, what force would there be in the fair critic's observation, in a foregoing page, that "our impression of Juliet's loveliness and sensibility is enhanced, when we find it overcoming in the bosom of Romeo his previous love for another?" There

* 'Characteristics,' &c.—3rd edition, vol. ii. p. 175-6.

would have been little triumph to the captivation of Juliet in banishing from the hero a merely affected passion; and therefore the full-length exhibiting of such an affectation could have conduced little to Shakespeare's leading dramatic purpose in this piece. It is, on the contrary, the very pangs, the heartfelt "pangs of despis'd love," to borrow Hamlet's phrase, that he has here chosen to portray in the language and demeanour of his hero. So far from making it, according to Mrs. Jameson's notion, a matter of chivalric vanity and ostentation, we see that, up to this point of the drama, neither his parents, nor his next kinsman Benvolio, have been able to draw from him the secret as to the individual cause of the grief and dejection in which he is absorbed, and which give them the most serious uneasiness concerning him. His father does not so much as know that he is in love at all; but, lamenting his obstinate concealment of his cause of sorrow, anxiously exclaims—

> Black and portentous must this humour prove,
> Unless good counsel may the cause remove.

Nor can his young cousin Benvolio, to whom he might be expected to be more confidential, though he draws from him the admission of his love-sick state, obtain, in the course of this dialogue, any indication as to the particular lady who is the object of his hopeless passion. Such communication, however, we must suppose to have been made before the opening of the next scene between the two cousins.

It is worthy of observation, too, that Romeo's friend of greatest gravity, Friar Laurence, and he of most levity, Mercutio, concur in attesting the seriousness of his first passion. Thus, in that subsequent scene where he acquaints the Friar with his new-born affection for Juliet, he is told by his confessor—

> Jesu Maria! what a deal of brine
> Hath wash'd thy sallow cheeks for Rosaline!
>
> . . . . .
>
> The sun not yet thy sighs from heaven clears,
> Thy old groans ring yet in my ancient ears;

Lo, here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit
Of an old tear, that is not wash'd off yet:
If e'er thou wast thyself, and these woes thine,
Thou and these woes were all for Rosaline.

And in the scene immediately following this, where Romeo meets with his two friends in the morning, after stealing from them the night before by leaping Capulet's orchard wall, we find Mercutio exclaiming—

Ah, that same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline, torments him so, that he will sure run mad;—

and again,—

Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead!—stabbed with a white wench's black eye—shot through the ear with a love-song—the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft. —And is he a man to encounter Tybalt?

From all this we gather that Romeo is suffering from the kind of rejection most tormenting to a nature like his—proceeding not from any preference on the part of his mistress for another, or any aversion to himself—but simply from her own passionless character—very different, it must be owned, from that other Rosaline, of the 'Love's Labour's Lost,' whom Biron describes as

A whitely *wanton*, with a velvet brow, &c.

Romeo's Rosaline, too, according to Mercutio's testimony, is "a *white* wench," black-eyed: but "she hath forsworn to love." This is, naturally, the last species of determination that any lover can bring himself to consider final in his mistress; and is precisely that most calculated to drive to madness a lover at once so exquisitely and so intensely sensitive and imaginative as Romeo. It is the same, for example, which, in Cervantes's beautiful and well-known story of the shepherdess Marcella, drives the enamoured Chrysostom, a character of Romeo's temperament, to despair and suicide. It is when the flow of imaginative passion, neither checked by aversion in its object, nor diverted by jealousy of a rival, is simply turned

back upon itself by indifference, that it exhibits the phenomena which, while they are wildest to the apprehension of the observer, are most torturing and most perilous to the subject of them.

This it is—this violent recoil of the feelings and the fancy—not the mere love of "descanting to his companions in pretty phrases," as Mrs. Jameson rather strangely supposes—that wrings from Romeo's breast those antithetical exclamations,—

> O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
> Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
> Feather of lead! bright smoke! cold fire! sick health!
> Still-waking sleep, &c.

This state of his mind is no subject of jocularity to any one of his friends, excepting that same Mercutio whom we find incapable of gravity even under the consciousness of his own mortal wound. Romeo, indeed, asks Benvolio, at the end of the passage last cited, "Dost thou not laugh?"—but Benvolio answers him, "No, coz, I rather weep." And to Romeo's reply, "Good heart, at what?" his kind-hearted cousin rejoins, "At thy good heart's oppression."

Benvolio, indeed, sees the matter perfectly right; and accordingly persists in administering that species of "good counsel," to repeat the words of the elder Montague, which alone, under the peculiar circumstances, "may the cause remove." And so, in his second colloquy with his enamoured cousin, he resumes the strain wherewith he had closed the former:—

> *Ben.* Tut, man! one fire burns out another's burning,
> One pain is lessen'd by another's anguish;
> Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning;
> One desperate grief cures with another's languish;
> Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
> And the rank poison of the old will die.
> *Rom.* Your plantain leaf is excellent for that.
> *Ben.* For what, I pray thee?
> *Rom.* For your broken shin.
> *Ben.* Why, Romeo, art thou mad?
> *Rom.* Not mad, but bound more than a madman is;
> Shut up in prison, kept without my food,

Whipp'd, and tormented, and——Good e'en, good fellow.
Capulet's Servant. God gi' good e'en. I pray, sir, can you read?
Rom. Ay, mine own fortune in my misery.

Ben. At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Sups the fair Rosaline whom thou so lov'st,
With all the admired beauties of Verona:
Go thither; and, with unattainted eye,
Compare her face with some that I shall shew,
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.
Rom. When the devout religion of mine eye
Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fires!
And these—who, often drown'd, could never die—
Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars!—
One fairer than my love!—the all-seeing sun
Ne'er saw her match, since first the world begun!
Ben. Tut! you saw her fair, none else being by,
Herself pois'd with herself, in either eye;
But in those crystal scales let there be weigh'd
Your lady-love against some other maid
That I will shew you, shining at this feast,
And she shall scant shew well, that now shews best.
Rom. I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,
But to rejoice in splendour of mine own!—

that is, to gaze at leisure on the charms of the inaccessible Rosaline, whose name he finds among those of the guests invited to Capulet's entertainment.

Having now brought Romeo to the threshold of the scene which changes and decides his destiny, it is time for us to consider the character and position of Juliet as indicated in the scenes preceding that of the masquerade.

3.—JULIET.—HER MEETING WITH ROMEO.

In accordance with his leading dramatic object in this play, its author has assigned to its heroine the most youthful age that would admit of his exhibiting the

perfect moral development of the girl into the woman, and of the maid into the wife, by the agency of that passion which is here his principal theme:

> My child is yet a stranger in the world,
> She hath not seen the change of fourteen years,

says her father, in his first dialogue with her accepted suitor Paris—this particular number of years being evidently chosen by the dramatist with a proper regard to the early maturity belonging to a southern clime.

As we find Romeo to be an only son, so Juliet, we learn also from her father, is an only surviving child—

> The earth hath swallow'd all my hopes but she,
> She is the hopeful lady of my earth.

The following scene, between herself, her lady mother, and her foster-nurse, distinctly sets before us the nature of the moral relations existing between the youthful heroine and the only two beings of her own sex with whom she has been brought up in habitual intimacy. Lady Capulet seems the very type of a cold, authoritative, aristocratic matron, who, so far from being in the confidence of any one feeling in her daughter's breast, has not once entertained the notion that this daughter may by possibility have feelings, and so be capable of preferences, of her own. In the affair of marriage, it is plain that no such considerations have ever troubled the elder lady in her own particular case; and so, arguing directly from herself to her daughter, she sums up the whole business to her own entire satisfaction in the following words to Juliet:—

> Younger than you,
> Here in Verona, ladies of esteem,
> Are made already mothers: by my count,
> I was your mother much upon these years
> That you are now a maid.

The Nurse, then, may well be excused for having little solicitude in the matter, beyond that of seeing

her latest and favourite foster-child married to *somebody*:—

> Thou wast the prettiest babe that e'er I nurs'd:
> An I might live to see thee married once,
> I have my wish.

We see that, in spite of all other differences, the essential vulgarity of view regarding the affair of marriage in the abstract, is precisely the same in the dignified and decorous, but stern and heartless mother of quality, as it is in the humble and illiterate foster-nurse, with her coarse but sincere fondness, and her low, garrulous humour. Lady Capulet, accordingly, calls in the Nurse as her most appropriate seconder in giving her daughter to understand what a delightful thing it must be, in any case, for a young lady to get a husband:—

> Nurse, give leave awhile,
> We must talk in secret.——Nurse, come back again;
> I have remember'd me, thou shalt hear our counsel.
> Thou knowst, my daughter 's of a pretty age, &c.

When the Nurse has so elegantly prepared the way, by the winding-up of her gossiping reminiscences of Juliet's infancy—

> To see, now, how a jest shall come about, &c.—

her ladyship, in a truly business-like spirit, loses no time in coming to the point:—

> Thus then, in brief—
> The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.
> *Nurse.* A man, young lady!—lady, such a man,
> As all the world——Why, he's a man of wax!
> *Lady Cap.* Verona's summer hath not such a flower.
> *Nurse.* Nay, he's a flower—in faith, a very flower!
> *Lady Cap.* What say you? can you love the gentleman?

No matter that her daughter has yet no personal knowledge whatever of this same exquisite Count Paris. Her lady mother evidently expects already a categorical answer to this last question; but receiving none, condescends to particularise a little more:—

This night you shall behold him at our feast:
Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;
Examine every married lineament,
And see how one another lends content;
And what obscur'd in this fair volume lies,
Find written in the margin of his eyes.
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
To beautify him, only lacks a cover:
The fish lives in the sea; and 'tis much pride
For fair without, the fair within to hide:
That book, in many's eyes, doth share the glory,
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story:
So shall you share all that he doth possess,
By having him, making yourself no less.
Nurse. No less?—nay, bigger; women grow by men.

After this, the lady ventures to repeat her question in a more peremptory form—

Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

But still her daughter, notwithstanding the absolute subjection in which she has been trained, feels that within her breast which tells her she cannot *promise*, even to her commanding mother, to love a man whom she has never seen:—

I'll look to like, *if looking liking move.*
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

However, the terms in which Capulet himself invites Paris to his entertainment, the words of Lady Capulet above-quoted, and those with which she closes this scene, in obeying the summons to the supper and the company that are waiting, "Juliet, the County stays,"—leave no doubt that the gentleman alluded to in Romeo's first line at the masking scene which follows—

What lady's that, which doth enrich the hand
Of yonder knight?—

is Paris himself, introduced to Juliet as her first suitor, with all those advantages of favourable prepossession which her approving parents have so studiously bestowed

upon him. To Romeo we must now return, since the first distinct indications that we find in the poet's text, as to the character and the transcendence of Juliet's beauty, are given us in those admiring exclamations of Romeo at the masquerade, which describe the impression he receives on first beholding her.

The scene between him and his cheerful friends Benvolio and Mercutio which immediately precedes that of the revelling at Capulet's house, carries on the same desponding strain in himself regarding his hopeless passion, which we have traced already through the earlier scenes:—

> *Rom.* Give me a torch—I am not for this ambling;
> Being but heavy, I will bear the light.
> *Mer.* Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.
> *Rom.* Not I, believe me: you have dancing shoes,
> With nimble soles; I have a soul of lead,
> So stakes me to the ground, I cannot move, &c.

In order to judge aright of his deportment in the following scene, and avoid imputing to him a levity from which the poet has made his character as remote as that of Juliet herself, it should be carefully borne in mind that Romeo is hardly less "a stranger in the world" of mixed society than Juliet is. He is yet but in the opening flower of manhood. In the early part of the piece we find all who know him calling him, by distinction, "the *young* Romeo;" and the same fact respecting him is conveyed in his father's beautiful comparison of his drooping son to

> the bud bit with an envious worm,
> Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air
> Or dedicate his beauty to the sun.

As for his first passion, it is clearly the impulse of a sensitive, ardent, and imaginative youth, coming fresh into the world, with infinite capabilities of affection, admiration, and enjoyment, towards the first handsome woman whom he has had an opportunity of contemplating at leisure. His friend Benvolio has shown us this where he says—

You saw her fair, none else being by, &c.

How little "young Romeo" can hitherto have been in company, appears very plainly also from the fact that this "old-accustomed feast" of Capulet's gives him the *first* opportunity of comparing "the fair Rosaline" with "all the admired beauties of Verona." Hitherto he had seen only

Herself pois'd with herself, in either eye.

And to the masquerade itself he goes with the sole and express purpose of admiring this cold and silent idol of his hopeless adoration. But that remedy, of comparison, which Benvolio had so earnestly prescribed to him, takes rapid effect; and we see at once that his immediate aspiration towards Juliet is in the opposite case to that which his kinsman has stated to us regarding his passion for Rosaline. He admires Juliet, not for want, but as the result, of comparison with "all the admired beauties of Verona:"—

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.

So much for the *comparative* impression which he receives from her external charms: the *positive* one he gives us thus:—

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear—
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!

After the truly and highly poetical temperament which we have already seen developed in Romeo, we may trust his judgment as to the exaltedly ideal character of Juliet's beauty; respecting which it seems important here to remark, that although delicate grace is the most essential quality of it thus indicated, yet a softly bright complexion is no less clearly pointed out —exceedingly different from that *peculiarly Italian* aspect and temperament which so much acting and so much criticism have concurred in attributing to this heroine. The ordinary mistake in this matter at the outset, whether made by reader and critic on the one

hand, or by performer and auditor on the other, entails throughout the piece a degrading misinterpretation of the dramatist's most essential meaning. The intensity of passion in his heroine, even as in his hero, results not from any peculiar vehemence of the blood, but from keenly exquisite sensibility stimulating a powerful imagination. With all that healthy vigour of character which her peculiar trials so rapidly unfold, yet every personal indication respecting Juliet that Shakespeare himself has left us, implies, both in her spirit and her aspect, all that nobly tender grace and that brightly delicate softness which alone could draw from an observer like Romeo the exclamation last cited—

> Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!—

and could make him so instantly come to the decision—

> Did my heart love till now?—forswear it, sight!
> For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.
> . . . . . .
> The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
> And, touching hers, make happy my rude hand!

Before we consider the brief ensuing dialogue between them, so decisive as to the leading feature of their fate, let us turn once more to examine the previous associations of Juliet, and the consequent state of feeling in which this unexpected interview comes upon her.

We have seen how little her finer qualities could possibly be appreciated by either of the only two female connexions with whom she had been trained, her haughty mother and her vulgar-minded nurse. How utterly insensible her father must have been to the peculiar delicacy of nature and dignity of spirit in his daughter, we shall have to shew abundantly in a later scene. Her only other male acquaintance has plainly been her cousin Tybalt; who, since she has no brother of her own, has supplied the place of one in her childish and youthful associations, being the sole object upon which her vast capability of sisterly affection has had any opportunity of ex-

pending itself. But how far from being sympathetic with her own character, if it be not absolutely antipathetic, is that of her "dear-loved cousin," we also find by his deportment in this very scene, and those which immediately follow. Nothing, surely, can be much more remote in nature than "the furious Tybalt" from the "tender Juliet."

The uneasy consciousness of imperfect sympathy which must hence have grown within her youthful breast, and which her now rapidly unfolding womanhood must have been rendering daily more oppressive, was another reason which could little disincline her to obey her lady mother's injunction—

> Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face, &c.

She might well hope and long to find, in the aspect and deportment of this much-commended suitor, some promise of that for which her young heart was pining more and more, a truly sympathising friend. But the livelier her hope on this occasion, the keener its disappointment. The handsome, all-accomplished young noble interests her not. His character, we shall see, comes out so fully in his subsequent conduct and language, as to leave no mystery in his failing to touch the heart of Juliet. No wonder that this selfish and self-complacent, though most unexceptionable young gentleman, should at once have been felt by her to be perfectly indifferent, if not positively repulsive, to her own sympathetic, generous, and imaginative nature. Poor Juliet—she is still as far to seek as ever for a friend!—and now, more than ever, must she feel the "aching void" within her bosom.

At this critical moment—her heart yearning for sympathy as even it had never yearned before—she is accosted by the dejected-looking stranger youth "that would not dance;" and the pretty, self-satisfied nothings addressed to her by her noble suitor, are followed, with harmonising and reverential tenderness of look, and tone, and touch, by those words of warmly delicate devotion—

If I profane, with my unworthy hand,
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this—
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand,
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

How, to these, the first looks, words, and tones, ever yet addressed to her, to which she could respond with all her ripening heart, should she do otherwise than so respond, while resigning her "flower-soft" hand, in terms of perfect and encouraging sympathy:—

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shews in this;
For saints have hands, that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

This may well be the first occasion in the drama, on which the exquisitely sympathetic soul of Juliet speaks; since, we see, it is the first opportunity of utterance that her life has yet afforded it.

Equally novel and decisive is the effect upon Romeo's heart, of this response so sweetly flowing from "rich music's tongue;" and equally natural and inevitable his rejoinder—

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

The answer is still "an *echo* to the seat where Love is throned"—

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

And so of the rest:—

Rom. O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair!
Jul. Saints do not move, though grant for prayer's sake.
Rom. Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.—
Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purg'd.
Jul. Then have my lips the sin that they have took.
Rom. Sin from my lips?—O trespass sweetly urg'd!—
Give me my sin again!
Jul. You kiss by the book.

After making himself fully sensible of the boundless craving for refined and poetic sympathy which the dramatist has shown to exist in the soul both of his hero and his heroine, and to be peculiarly stimulated at that moment by the personal circumstances of each,

what reader does not intuitively perceive that an interview and a colloquy like this, with all their brevity, must of entire necessity decide the fate of either heart —in spite even of the cruel obstacle presented by the deadly hostility between their respective families? Who does not anticipate Romeo's exclamation on learning Juliet's parentage—

> O dear account! my life is my foe's debt—

that is, *My foe is henceforth mistress of my life,*—and the corresponding one of Juliet, still echoing every impulse towards her of Romeo's spirit—

> My only love sprung from my only hate!—
> Too early seen unknown, and known too late!—
> Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
> That I must love a loathed enemy!

Yes—no matter for their "households' rancour"—each can henceforth live but in the other, and separation must be death to both. What to them can be the fear of ordinary death, compared to the privation of that new existence of which they have just tasted the first delicious draught!

Truly and perfectly, though quaintly, are the reflections and anticipations of the thoughtful reader or auditor, at this stage of the drama, embodied in those lines (omitted in modern acting) which Shakespeare, as if to recall distinctly to his general audience the tenour of the story up to this point, has directed to be delivered by way of chorus at the conclusion of this first act:—

> Now old *desire* doth in his death-bed lie,
> And young *affection* gapes to be his heir;
> That fair, which love had groan'd for, and would die,
> With *tender* Juliet match'd, is now not fair.
> Now Romeo is belov'd, and loves again,
> Alike bewitched by the charm of looks—
> But to his foe suppos'd he must complain,
> And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful hooks.
> Being held a foe, he may not have access
> To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear;
> And she as much in love, her means much less
> To meet her new-beloved anywhere.

But passion lends them power, time means to meet,
Tempering extremities with extreme sweet.

A fitting prologue this, to the exhibition of that stolen courtship which opens the following act, and of which we have just now been considering the sweet and fatal prelude.

4.—COURTSHIP OF ROMEO AND JULIET.

When Romeo, in returning from the masquerade, has made his escape from his light-hearted companions, and leaped the wall of Capulet's garden with the exclamation—

Can I go forward, while my heart is here!—

we find his apostrophe to Juliet, whom he discovers at the balcony, to be at once an amplification and an exaltation of the terms in which he had expressed his admiration on first beholding her,—that poetry which is the natural language of passion in a spirit like his, taking a higher and purer charm from that surrounding vernal air and moonlight, the balmy solitude of which immediately succeeds, upon the scene, to the close, torch-lighted atmosphere of the crowded ball-room. And in lieu of

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!

we have—

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
. . . . . .
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return!
. . . . . .
Oh, speak again, bright angel—for thou art
More glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
Than is a winged messenger of heaven, &c.

Juliet, on the other hand, yet unconscious of Romeo's presence in the garden below, simply breathes out the impulse of her heart towards the man of its choice, in spite of the attendant sense of the formidable bar opposed to their further intercourse:—

> O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
> Deny thy father, and refuse thy name;
> Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
> And I'll no longer be a Capulet!
> *Rom.* Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?
> *Jul.* 'Tis but thy name, that is my enemy;—
> Thou art thyself though, not a Montague.
> What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
> Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
> Belonging to a man. Oh, be some other name!
> What's in a name?—That which we call a rose,
> By any other name would smell as sweet;
> So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
> Retain that dear perfection which he owes,
> Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name;
> And for that name, which is no part of thee,
> Take all myself!
> *Rom.* I take thee at thy word:
> Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;
> Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

How beautifully natural is the instant checking of her heart's effusion which we find in Juliet at this totally unlooked-for interruption, like the nightingale startled in the prelude of her song—

> What man art thou, that, thus bescreen'd in night,
> So stumblest on my counsel?

Equally beautiful, again, is the reluctance of Romeo to wound her ear with the name so inseparably associated with the discord between their families, and Juliet's instant recognition of him by the silvery voice:—

> *Rom.* By a name,
> I know not how to tell thee who I am:
> My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
> Because it is an enemy to thee;
> Had I it written, I would tear the word.
> *Jul.* My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
> Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound;
> Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?
> *Rom.* Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

Again, how characteristic of the perfect singleness and generosity of feeling in the youthful heroine, is her instant transition to the sense of danger to Romeo from the enmity of her relatives, and her anxious dwelling upon this theme until he has thoroughly satisfied her that none of them are cognizant of his presence within their walls:—

Jul. How cam'st thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high, and hard to climb;
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.
Rom. With Love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold Love out;
And what Love can do, that dares Love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.
Jul. If they do see thee, they will murder thee!
Rom. Alack! there lies more peril in thine eye,
Than twenty of their swords; look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.
Jul. I would not for the world they saw thee here!
Rom. I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;
And, but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love!
Jul. By whose direction found'st thou out this place?
Rom. By Love's, who first did prompt me to enquire;
He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.
I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise!

Being now reassured, by these last sentences of Romeo, both as to his present safety, and as to his passion for herself, her honest enthusiastic heart impels her to keep her lover no longer in suspense, but repeat that avowal to himself which, be it well observed, she knows him to have already overheard her making, as she supposed, in the sole presence of the moonlight heaven. Again, it is "as the new-abashed nightingale," resuming her strain, pouring forth in security her fullest, richest notes, "through all the maze of sweetness running:"—

Thou know'st, the mask of night is on my face;
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek

For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.
Fain would I dwell on form—fain, fain, deny
What I have spoke.—But farewell compliment!—
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say, Ay;—
And I will take thy word. Yet, if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries,
They say, Jove laughs.——O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay—
So then wilt woo—but else not for the world!——
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond;
And therefore thou mayst think my 'haviour light:
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was 'ware,
My true love's passion. Therefore pardon me;
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

In all this, amidst all the flutterings of maiden delicacy and feminine apprehensiveness, how charmingly do we read the boundless confidence in her lover's truth and sympathy which already fills her bosom. In this fulness of trust it is, that we find her checking his every protestation at its very first syllable:—

Rom. Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear,
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops,——
Jul. Oh, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable!
Rom. What shall I swear by?
Jul. Do not swear at all;
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee!
Rom. If my heart's dear love——
Jul. Well, do not swear, &c.

The gush of new-sprung happiness which has come upon her so suddenly and so deliciously, from this full assurance of Romeo's requital of her love, and this frank outpouring of their mutual passion, seems, at the first moment, to the inexperienced heart of Juliet, such all-sufficient bliss, that it spontaneously pauses to

take breath, as it were, in the midst of its tremulous transport:—

Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say, It lightens. Sweet, good night!
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
Good night, good night!—as sweet repose and rest
Come to thy heart, as that within my breast!

But how brief a pause, and how few more tones from the beloved voice, we see, suffice to teach her that, in a nature like hers, after each momentary ebb, she will find each succeeding wave in the rising tide of passion to swell more full and resistless than the former:—

Rom. Oh, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?
Jul. What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?
Rom. The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.
Jul. I gave thee mine before thou didst request it—
And yet I would it were to give again!
Rom. Wouldst thou withdraw it?—for what purpose, love?
Jul. But to be frank, and give it thee again.
And yet I wish but for the thing I have:
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite!——
I hear some noise within—Dear love, adieu!——
Anon, good nurse——Sweet Montague, be true——
Stay but a little, I will come again.
Rom. O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard,
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial!

When Juliet re-appears, her first words tell us how far the flow of her feelings has advanced beyond the point at which she could say, "I have no joy of this contract to-night." "This bud of love," to use her own expression, so far from waiting for "summer's ripening breath," to "prove a beauteous flower," expands *at once* by its internal energy:—

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.—
If that thy bent of love be honourable,

Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where, and what time, thou wilt perform the rite;
And all my fortunes at thy feet I'll lay,
And follow thee my lord throughout the world!
Nurse (*within*). Madam——
Jul. I come anon.——But if thou mean'st not well,
I do beseech thee,——
Nurse (*within*). Madam——
Jul. By and by, I come.——
To cease thy suit, and leave me to my grief.—
To-morrow will I send.
Rom. So thrive my soul,——
Jul. A thousand times good night!
Rom. A thousand times the worse, to want thy light.
Love goes toward love, as school-boys from their books;
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks!

This last reflection of Romeo's we find illustrated by Juliet's returning once more to the balcony, and by the following piece of dialogue, so exquisitely expressing the *impossibility* to part, after such a meeting—the pang of separation, the more bitter for the sweetness of their converse:—

Hist! Romeo, hist! Oh for a falconer's voice,
To lure this tassel-gentle back again!
Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud;
Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine
With repetition of my Romeo's name!
Rom. It is my soul, that calls upon my name:
How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,
Like softest music to attending ears!
Jul. Romeo!
Rom. My sweet!
Jul. At what o'clock to-morrow
Shall I send to thee?
Rom. At the hour of nine.
Jul. I will not fail—'tis twenty years till then!——
I have forgot why I did call thee back.
Rom. Let me stand here, till thou remember it.
Jul. I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,
Remembering how I love thy company.
Rom. And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,
Forgetting any other home but this.
Jul. 'Tis almost morning—I would have thee gone—
And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,

Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty!
Rom. I would I were thy bird!
Jul. Sweet, so would I:
Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing!——
Good night, good night!—Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good night, till it be morrow!
Rom. Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast!—
Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest!

At the risk even of wearisome repetition, we can liken the dramatic melody of this passage to nothing but the "sweetest, saddest strain" warbled by the bird of spring-time evening amid its balmiest air. How deliciously, again, does it express that *perfect unison* of soul—in sentiment—in idea—in language—in everything—which the poet has so peculiarly preserved between this pair, in each successive phasis of their feelings. For, the hearts of these lovers do not *rush* together with the impetuosity of the torrent, as supposed by those who regard this drama as a painting of *peculiarly Italian* passion: they *glide* into one, quickly indeed, but gently, as the softest and pearliest of kindred dewdrops trembling together in the morning's ray.

5.—MARRIAGE OF ROMEO AND JULIET.

THEIR betrothment is now completed, under circumstances which invite them to celebrate their marriage with all secresy, but with the least possible delay. It is not only that the ardour of their mutual passion, the absolute devotion of each to the other, leaves them little room for any other consideration; but under the peculiar relation of inveterate hostility which subsists

between their respective families, the very delay which, under ordinary circumstances, might serve to obviate the most serious obstacles to the undisturbed happiness of such a union, by the obtaining of parental sanction, would here, in all probability, but give occasion for opposing to it an eternal bar. Romeo, therefore, instinctively proceeds at once from his interview with Juliet, to seek the aid of his confessor in this matter:—

> Hence will I to my ghostly father's cell,
> His help to crave, and my dear hap to tell.

The immediate introduction of Friar Laurence, talking like one to whom Love has ever been an utter stranger, forms a fine relief to the exquisite passionateness of the preceding scene, and to the eagerness with which Romeo comes to solicit his present assistance. How innocent the kind-hearted ecclesiastic is of all amatory experience, is evident from the impossibility which Romeo finds of making him understand the essential difference between his late passion for Rosaline and his present devotion to Juliet. To the simple apprehension of the worthy friar, all love is alike, and all love is vanity. That which the very course of this drama shews to be the most serious thing in life, is, to his ascetic view, the emptiest:—

> A lover may bestride the gossomers
> That idle in the wanton summer air,
> And yet not fall—so light is vanity!

No matter that Romeo tells him—

> She whom I love now,
> Doth grace for grace, and love for love allow;
> The other did not so.

Still he rejoins—

> Oh, she knew well,
> Thy love did read by rote, and could not spell.

He can discover nothing in Romeo's change of mistresses but the mere fickleness of youth—

> But come, young *waverer*, &c.

He discerns, however, a much graver cause, as he esteems it, than the interests of a mutual passion, for sanctioning the desired union. It is not only that he sees no "lawful impediment" to the marriage itself; but he foresees a most important good consequence to which it will directly conduce—the healing of the sanguinary discord between their families which has so long been the scourge and scandal of their city, and the extinction of which has therefore been the prime object in the wishes of every good citizen:—

> Come, go with me:
> In one respect I'll thy assistant be;
> For this alliance may so happy prove,
> To turn your households' rancour to pure love.

In order to appreciate throughout both the depth and the purity of interest which the dramatist, in this piece, has attached to the characters and fortunes of his hero and heroine, it is most essential for the reader to be fully impressed, at this point of the story, with the fact that the two highest motives within the breast of their spiritual director, religion and patriotism, here determine him deliberately to lend the most solemn sanction, not only to the secret contracting of their marriage, but to that clandestine celebration of it which the circumstances of present hostility between their families necessitate. Thus their union becomes at once no less religiously and patriotically than it is morally hallowed; and its prosperity is henceforth the one grand subject of tragic interest.

> O let us hence—I stand on sudden haste,

exclaims Romeo eagerly at the close of this scene; and although his spiritual father coolly replies,

> Wisely and slow—they stumble that run fast,

yet he consents to solemnize the marriage in the course of that very day, as we find by Romeo's directions to the Nurse, who in the following scene delivers to him Juliet's message:—

Bid her devise some means to come to shrift
This afternoon;
And there she shall, at Friar Laurence' cell,
Be shriv'd, and married.

. . . . . .

And stay, good nurse, behind the abbey wall:
Within this hour my man shall be with thee,
And bring thee cords made like a tackled stair,
Which to the high top-gallant of my joy
Must be my convoy in the secret night.

The flow of buoyant spirits produced in Romeo by this certain prospect of the happy realization of his present wishes, contrasts most naturally with his lately drooping state under his hopeless passion; and the strain in which Mercutio greets him, as usual, in the opening of this scene—"Oh, flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified," &c., is followed with fine effect by that lively bandying of wit between them, upon Romeo's cheerfully fluent share in which, his mercurial friend thus felicitates him:—

Why, is not this better, now, than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo, now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature, &c.

Not less finely does it contrast with the enthusiastic impatience of Juliet, who is all this while kept in suspense by the protracted absence of the Nurse upon this errand. The scene, on the Nurse's return, wherein she so perseveringly tantalizes the foster-child of whom she is so dotingly fond, requires, for the thorough understanding of it, that we should here examine the precise relation in which the foster-mother stands to this clandestine love affair of her darling girl.

The old lady, we see, acknowledges to Romeo himself, at their first interview, "I anger her sometimes, and tell her that Paris is the properer man." Now, how much soever she might intend Romeo to receive this observation of hers in jest, it is evident, nevertheless, that this was the worthy Nurse's own sincere opinion. Paris, not Romeo, was the man to strike and win the eye of a person like her. The "palpable

gross" character of manly beauty, with the self-conscious and self-complacent air, is that which takes the vulgar observation,—not that sensitive delicacy of organization and texture, with the look expressive of a soul ever living out of self-consciousness, which could alone captivate the sympathies of a Juliet. If, accordingly, the inherently vulgar spirit of a Lady Capulet could, as we have seen, regard Paris as the ideal of a lover, the every-way vulgar taste of the Nurse may well be deemed excusable for desiring this "man of wax," as she admiringly calls him, as a husband for her foster-daughter—though the latter, it is plain, is as unimpressible by his attractions as if he were a man of wax in inanimate reality.

The Nurse, most unaffectedly wondering what the girl could have seen to fall in love with, in the pallid and dejected youth, had undoubtedly exhausted her homely rhetoric in combating her preference, until, finding it all in vain—that she only produced irritation instead of conviction—"but I warrant you, when I say so, she looks as pale as any clout in the varsal world,"—she had consented to become her confidant and her agent in effecting and concealing her union with the husband of her choice—incapable of persisting in opposition, in this matter above all others, to the steady as well as ardent wishes of that "prettiest babe" whom she had ever been accustomed to indulge and spoil, so far as a nature like hers could be spoiled, by procuring the gratification of her every girlish desire. Still, at the last moment, when just returned from her errand to Romeo, with the last decisive intelligence for Juliet, of the appointed hour for their marriage, the old guardian cannot resist the opportunity for giving vent to her yet lingering resentment against what she thinks her darling's mistaken choice, by teazingly protracting her suspense as to the news from Romeo—the consequent dialogue between them receiving higher vividness of effect from the poetically glowing burst of fond impatience which we have heard the moment before in Juliet's garden soliloquy:—

The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse;
In half an hour she promis'd to return.——
Perchance she cannot meet him.——That's not so.——
Oh, she is lame!—Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams
Driving back shadows over low'ring hills:
Therefore do nimble-pinion'd doves draw Love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings!——
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
Of this day's journey; and from nine till twelve
Is three long hours,—yet she is not come!
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She'd be as swift in motion as a ball—
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
And his to me!

. . . . . .

O God, she comes!——O honey nurse, what news?—
Hast thou met with him?—Send thy man away.

How well, we say, does this set off the following piece of dialogue, wherein the Nurse so teazingly and provokingly delays her delivery of Romeo's message:—

Jul. Now, good sweet nurse,—O Lord! why look'st
thou sad?
Though news be sad, yet tell them merrily;
If good, thou sham'st the music of sweet news
By playing it to me with so sour a face!
Nurse. I am aweary—give me leave awhile;
Fye, how my bones ache! What a jaunt have I had!
Jul. I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news;
Nay, come, I pray thee, speak—good, good nurse, speak!
Nurse. Jesu, what haste? can you not stay awhile?
Do you not see, that I am out of breath?
Jul. How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
The excuse that thou dost make in this delay,
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse.
Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that;
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance:
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad?

And now the old lady reluctantly relents, as we see by her evasive reply, wherein she still endeavours to dispraise Romeo, but her fondness for her foster-daughter constantly brings her round to the side of commendation, though she cannot yet bring herself thoroughly to give up the point:—

Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! no, not he; though his face be better than any man's, yet—his leg excels all men's;—and for a hand, and a foot, and a body,—though they be not to be talked on—yet they are past compare.—He is not the flower of courtesy—but, I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb.——Go thy ways, wench—serve God.——What, have you dined at home?

Jul. No, no: but all this did I know before;
What says he of our marriage? what of that?

Nurse. Lord, how my head akes! what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces——
My back o' t'other side! oh, my back, my back!——
Beshrew your heart, for sending me about,
To catch my death with jaunting up and down!

Jul. I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well——
Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

Nurse. Your love says, like an honest gentleman,
And a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome,
And, I warrant, a virtuous——Where is your mother?

Jul. Where is my mother?—why, she is within;
Where should she be? How oddly thou reply'st!
Your love says, like an honest gentleman,—
Where is your mother?

Nurse. Oh, God's lady dear!
Are you so hot? Marry come up, I trow,
Is this the poultice for my aking bones?——
Henceforward do your messages yourself.

Jul. Here's such a coil!——Come, what says Romeo?

The Nurse's resentment against Juliet's pertinacious choice, having now reached its climax, is, in a character like hers, necessarily exhausted; and there is nothing left for her but to say,

Have you got leave to go to shrift to-day?

Jul. I have.

Nurse. Then, hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell;
There stays a husband to make you a wife.——
Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks—
They'll be in scarlet straight at *any* news.——
Hie you to church.

Jul. Hie to high fortune!——Honest nurse, farewell.

How beautifully our feeling of this airy buoyancy of Juliet in hastening to her nuptials, is continued in the Friar's exclamation in the following scene:—

Here comes the lady. Oh, so light a foot
Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint!

The exchange of greeting between the lovers on this occasion, affords another remarkable instance of that perfect unison of soul between them which the poet has so undeviatingly preserved throughout the piece:—

Rom. Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy
Be heap'd like mine, and that thy skill be more
To blazon it,—then sweeten with thy breath
This neighbour air, and let rich music's tongue
Unfold the imagin'd happiness that both
Receive in either by this dear encounter!
Jul. Conceit more rich in matter than in words,
Brags of his substance, not of ornament:
They are but beggars, that can count their worth;
But my true love is grown to such excess,
I cannot sum up half my sum of wealth!
Friar. Come, come with me, and we will make short work;
For, by your leaves, you shall not stay alone,
Till holy church incorporate two in one.

6.—ROMEO'S DUEL WITH TYBALT.—HIS PARTING WITH JULIET.

So far, all is prosperous with our hero and heroine. But now comes their first great trial, resulting—not from any defect of character in either of them, as has sometimes been hastily supposed—but from that overruling adverse destiny—triumphing eventually over the worldly happiness of the lovers, though triumphed over by their mutual constancy—which is the true mainspring of this great tragedy. In like manner as the dramatist has carefully kept Romeo blameless in the secret marriage, has he studiously shown him to be irreproachable in the fatal duel. In order to perceive this with the full conviction which the poet has intended to impress, we must consider attentively the very opposite character which he has assigned to

that young kinsman of Juliet's who so violently forces Romeo to become his personal antagonist.

Nothing, indeed, can contrast more perfectly than the violent harshness of the former character with the gentle harmony of the latter. Romeo has taken no personal interest whatever in the old family feud; he is no further implicated in it than as being "a Montague" by the mere accident of birth. Even the head of the opposite house admits that

> Verona brags of him
> To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth.

But Tybalt finds in this hereditary quarrel a most acceptably permanent means of venting his natural turbulence and malignity—he out-Capulet's Capulet—is a studiously professed and practised duellist—that is, the most offensive compound of bully and assassin,—and is consequently "the very head and front" of the "bandying in Verona streets"—the most habitual and incorrigible disturber of the public peace. Most fitly, therefore, is he here made to personify that spirit of discord, the disastrous collision of which with the exquisite harmony of the principal subject, runs through the piece, and creates its tragic interest.

How finely is this fatal clashing of these two dramatic elements foreshadowed by the placing of Tybalt's altercation with his uncle Capulet, concerning Romeo's presence as a masker at their feast, so as exactly to fill the short interval between Romeo's admiring exclamation at first beholding Juliet, and his words in first accosting her:—

> *Tyb.* This, by his voice, should be a Montague.——
> Fetch me my rapier, boy.——What! dares the slave
> Come hither, cover'd with an antic face,
> To fleer and scorn at our solemnity!
> Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,
> To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.
> *Cap.* Why, how now, kinsman? wherefore storm you so?
> *Tyb.* Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe;
> A villain, that is hither come in spite,
> To scorn at our solemnity this night.

Cap. Young Romeo is't?
Tyb. 'Tis he, that villain Romeo.
Cap. Content thee, gentle coz, let him alone;
He bears him like a portly gentleman;
And, to say truth, Verona brags of him
To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth;
I would not, for the wealth of all this town,
Here in my house do him disparagement:
Therefore be patient—take no note of him—
It is my will; the which if thou respect,
Shew a fair presence, and put off those frowns,
An ill-beseeming semblance for a feast.
Tyb. It fits, when such a villain is a guest;
I'll not endure him.
Cap. He shall be endured.—
What, goodman boy!—I say, he shall.—Go to.—
Am I the master here, or you?—Go to.—
You'll not endure him!—God shall mend my soul—
You'll make a mutiny among my guests!
You will set cock-a-hoop! you'll be the man!
Tyb. Why, uncle, 'tis a shame.
Cap. Go to, go to,
You are a saucy boy.—Is't so, indeed?—
This trick may chance to scathe you.—I know what.—
You must contrary me!—Marry, 'tis time——
Well said, my hearts.——You are a princox—go—
Be quiet, or——More light, more light.——For shame!
I'll make you quiet.—What!——Cheerly, my hearts!
Tyb. Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting,
Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.
I will withdraw; but this intrusion shall,
Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall. [*Exit.*

In how lively and forcible a manner are we here shown, that this propensity of Tybalt's to indulge his own spiteful violence by bringing forward the family quarrel upon every occasion, even the most improper, makes him a provoking nuisance even to his own kindred. As he himself has given us to understand in the words last quoted, he is not so easily to be withheld when meditating mischief. Early next morning, he sends Romeo a challenge, to his father's house—the receipt of which, had Romeo been at home, would have warned him to keep for a while out of the way of Juliet's quarrelsome cousin; but, being occupied, as we have seen, with the Friar, about the

arrangements for his marriage, the first notice that he has of Tybalt's hostile intention is, from encountering his antagonist in person, just after the marriage with Juliet has made him his kinsman. Let us here observe the care which the dramatist has taken to prevent the possibility of our at all mistaking the motives of Romeo in declining the combat with Tybalt,—by letting us know his previously established reputation for courage, in the following passage of the colloquy between Benvolio and Mercutio:—

Ben. Tybalt, the kinsman of old Capulet, hath sent a letter to his father's house.
Mer. A challenge, on my life.
Ben. Romeo will answer it.
Mer. Any man, that can write, may answer a letter.
Ben. Nay, he will answer the letter's master, how he dares, being dared.

We are thus prepared to give credit to the perfect singleness of the motive which Romeo covertly alleges, in the ensuing altercation, for declining Tybalt's defiance:—

Tyb. Romeo, the hate I bear thee can afford
No better term than this—Thou art a villain.
Rom. Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee,
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting.—Villain am I none;
Therefore, farewell; I see, thou know'st me not.
Tyb. Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
That thou hast done me; therefore turn, and draw.
Rom. I do protest, I never injur'd thee;
But love thee better than thou canst devise,
Till thou shalt know the reason of my love:
And so, good Capulet,—which name I tender
As dearly as mine own,—be satisfied.

It is plain, that Romeo is not at liberty to accept the challenge. It is equally plain, that he declines it in as dignified a manner as it is possible to do, without disclosing the secret which it so much behoves him to keep. But his spirited friend Mercutio, not suspecting its real motive, at once ascribes his reluctance to the apprehension which he entertains of Tybalt's superior swordsmanship; and now thinks himself

bound in honour to take up the quarrel in earnest, in which Tybalt had already been engaging him at the moment of Romeo's arrival:—

> *Mer.* O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!
> *Alla stoccata* carries it away.——
> Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk? &c.

Romeo has now no resource, for preventing bloodshed between his friend and his newly-made kinsman, but by appealing to their respect for the law:—

> Draw, Benvolio;
> Beat down their weapons.—Gentlemen, for shame.—
> Forbear this outrage.—Tybalt!—Mercutio!—
> The prince expressly hath forbid this bandying
> In Verona streets.—Hold Tybalt!—Good Mercutio!

But this interference serves only to enable Tybalt, true to his character, to give his antagonist, with impunity, a mortal thrust under Romeo's arm. The predicament in which the latter is placed by this occurrence, is expressed with the greatest precision in his own reflection upon Mercutio's being carried off:—

> This gentleman, the prince's near ally,
> My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
> In my behalf; my reputation stain'd
> With Tybalt's slander—Tybalt, that an hour
> Hath been my kinsman!

The balance of his feelings is already poised equally between the two opposing motives, as is beautifully shown us in the added sentence—

> O sweet Juliet,
> Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,
> And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!

Mercutio's decease, and Tybalt's re-appearance, turn the scale instantly and inevitably on the side of honour:—

> *Ben.* Here comes the furious Tybalt back again.
> *Rom.* Alive! in triumph! and Mercutio slain!——
> Away to heaven, respective lenity,
> And fire-ey'd fury be my conduct now!—
> Now, Tybalt, take the *villain* back again,

That late thou gav'st me; for Mercutio's soul
Is but a little way above our heads,
Staying for thine to keep him company;
Or thou or I, or both, must go with him!
Tyb. Thou, wretched boy, that didst consort him here,
Shalt with him hence.
Rom. This shall determine that.

The sequel is best told in the words of Benvolio to the prince:—

And to't they go like lightning; for, ere I
Could draw to part them, was stout Tybalt slain;
And, as he fell, did Romeo turn and fly.

Morally, as well as in honour, we see that Romeo is thoroughly absolved—so thoroughly as to prevent the supreme magistrate himself from applying to him the law in its rigour:—

Lady Cap. I beg for justice, which thou, prince, must give;
Romeo slew Tybalt, Romeo must not live.
Prince. Romeo slew him, he slew Mercutio;
Who now the price of his dear blood doth owe?
Montague. Not Romeo, prince, he was Mercutio's friend;
His fault concludes but, what the law should end,
The life of Tybalt.
Prince. And for that offence,
Immediately we do exile him hence, &c.

In like manner, we find even his worthy confessor and confidant, with whom he now takes refuge, expressing simple compassion for his present position, unmingled with the smallest particle of reproach:—

Fri. Romeo, come forth; come forth, thou fearful man;
Affliction is enamour'd of thy parts,
And thou art wedded to calamity!
Rom. Father, what news? what is the prince's doom?
What sorrow craves acquaintance at my hand,
That I yet know not?
Fri. Too familiar
Is my dear son with such sour company:
I bring thee tidings of the prince's doom.
Rom. What less than dooms-day is the prince's doom?
Fri. A gentler judgment vanish'd from his lips;
Not body's death, but body's banishment.
Rom. Ha! banishment?—be merciful—say, death—
For exile hath more terror in his look,
Much more than death: do not say, banishment!

The intolerable anguish of a forced separation at such a moment—the worse than rending asunder of the young heart, by this sudden cheating of its fondest and most eager anticipation—is developed in all its intensity by the ensuing dialogue—stimulated at once, and contrasted, as it is, by the impassive coolness of the Friar's otherwise kind exhortations. This appears most expressively in the concluding portion of the colloquy, which carries the passion to the climax:—

Fri. Thou fond mad man, hear me but speak a word.
Rom. Oh, thou wilt speak again of banishment!
Fri. I'll give thee armour to keep off that word—
Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy,
To comfort thee, though thou art banished.
Rom. Yet *banished?*—Hang up philosophy!
Unless philosophy can make a Juliet,
Displant a town, reverse a prince's doom,
It helps not, it prevails not—talk no more!
Fri. Oh, then I see, that madmen have no ears.
Rom. How should they, when that wise men have no eyes?
Fri. Let me dispute with thee of thy estate.

This last sentence from the Friar, most exquisitely and consummately expresses the utter inaccessibility of the worthy old man's apprehension to the intractable nature of the feeling which agonizes his ill-fated pupil. Romeo's reply is not more intensely impassioned than it is logically conclusive:—

Thou canst not speak of what thou dost not feel:
Wert thou as young as I,—Juliet thy love,—
An hour but married,—Tybalt murdered,—
Doting like me,—and like me banished,—
Then might'st thou speak, *then* might'st thou tear thy hair,
And fall upon the ground as I do now,
Taking the measure of an unmade grave!

We must now return to Juliet. For the effect upon her feelings, of this same violent shock, we are the more excitingly prepared by that soliloquy of hers which breathes out—or rather, indeed, thinks aloud—with such exquisitely poetic truth, all those blissful imaginings which, while her bridegroom becomes so unhappily engaged, she is left to indulge, in the leisure and seclusion of her chamber.

We would willingly have deemed that the time was gone by when any class of readers or auditors could require this celebrated passage to be vindicated to them on the score of delicacy; but we feel bound to accept Mrs. Jameson's testimony to the fact, where she tells us:—"I confess I have been shocked at the utter want of taste and refinement in those who, with coarse derision, or in a spirit of prudery, yet more gross and perverse, have dared to comment on this beautiful 'Hymn to the night,' breathed out by Juliet in the silence and solitude of her chamber."* It is well observed by Hazlitt:—"Such critics do not perceive that the feelings of the heart sanctify, without disguising, the impulses of nature. Without refinement themselves, they confound modesty with hypocrisy." Coleridge, again, justly remarks—"The whole of this speech is imagination strained to the highest; and observe the blessed effect on the purity of the mind. What would Dryden have made of it?"† To this question we may answer, that we can judge pretty well what he would have made of it, from his doings with Miranda, &c., in 'The Tempest.' Schlegel, in fine, sums up the matter truly and decisively, where he says, in relation to this play—"It was reserved for Shakespeare to unite purity of heart with the glow of imagination, sweetness and dignity of manners with passionate vehemence, in one ideal picture:"—

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phœbus' mansion; such a waggoner
As Phaëton would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.—
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing Night,
That runaways' eyes may wink, and Romeo
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen!—
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
By their own beauties—or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night.—Come, civil Night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,

* 'Characteristics,' &c.—3rd edition, vol. i. p. 193.
† 'Literary Remains,' vol. ii. p. 156.

Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:
Hood my unmann'd blood bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted, simple modesty.—
Come, night! come, Romeo! come, thou day in night!
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.—
Come, gentle Night; come, loving black-brow'd Night,
Give me my Romeo: and when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine,
That all the world will be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun!—
Oh, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it; and, though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd.—So tedious is this day,
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child, that hath new robes
And may not wear them.——Oh, here comes my nurse,
And she brings news—and every tongue that speaks
But Romeo's name, speaks heavenly eloquence!——
Now, nurse, what news?

Let us now observe the art with which the awkward simplicity of the Nurse's broken narrative is managed, so as to stir every agitating emotion in the breast of Juliet—each successive one more violent than the preceding—until her agony attains its climax. The old woman's first exclamations, which seem to announce Romeo's death, give the first blow, the merely stunning suddenness of which strikes from Juliet the bewildered question—

Can heaven be so envious?——

The Nurse's equivocal reply,—

Romeo can,
Though heaven cannot:—O Romeo! Romeo!—
Who ever would have thought it?—Romeo!—

creates a suspense the most horrible:—

What devil art thou, that dost torment me thus?
This torture should be roar'd in dismal hell!
Hath Romeo slain himself? &c.

The perverse simplicity with which the Nurse goes on—

I saw the wound, I saw it with mine eyes, &c.—

seeming to bespeak the certainty of Romeo's end, makes the instant transition in Juliet's bosom to mere desolation:—

O break, my heart! poor bankrupt, break at once!
To prison, eyes! ne'er look on liberty!
Vile earth, to earth resign—end motion here—
And thou and Romeo press one heavy bier!

Next comes the announcement of Tybalt's death, which seems to be added to that of Romeo:—

Nurse. Oh, Tybalt, Tybalt, the best friend I had—
Oh, courteous Tybalt, honest gentleman,—
That ever I should live to see thee dead!
Jul. What storm is this, that blows so contrary?
Is Romeo slaughter'd, and is Tybalt dead—
My dear-lov'd cousin, and my dearer lord?—
Then, dreadful trumpet, sound the general doom—
For who is living, if those two are gone!
Nurse. Tybalt is gone, and Romeo banished—
Romeo that kill'd him, he is banished.
Jul. Oh God! did Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood?
Nurse. It did, it did, alas the day, it did!

Here is the most terrible blow that has yet been dealt her, in the sudden intelligence that her adored bridegroom has taken the life of the being nearest to himself in her affections. The bare idea of this fact, at once pierces her soul and fires her imagination, leaving her no leisure to reflect upon its causes. Let us mark the abrupt and violent shock between the two opposing currents of feeling in her bosom, which appears in every line, in every phrase, of her following exclamations:—

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feather'd raven! wolvish-ravening lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st!
A damned saint! an honourable villain!—
Oh, Nature, what hadst thou to do in hell,
When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend
In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh?—

Was ever book, containing such vile matter,
So fairly bound?—Oh, that Deceit should dwell
In such a gorgeous palace!*

The Nurse, having never had any real liking for Romeo, readily catches up by itself the strain of reproach which we have just heard intermingled with that of admiration in Juliet's exclamations under her first agonizing surprise:—

There's no trust,
No faith, no honesty in men; all perjur'd,
All forsworn, all naught, all dissemblers!—
Ah, where's my man? give me some *aqua-vitæ*.—
These griefs, these woes, these sorrows, make me old!—
Shame come to Romeo!

This unqualified vituperation from the lips of the Nurse gives for the moment, by the resistance which it arouses, an exclusive ascendancy to the opposite current of feeling in Juliet's bosom:—

Blister'd be thy tongue
For such a wish!—he was not born to shame:

* Mrs. Jameson (vol. i, p. 196) remarks upon this passage in the same manner that we have seen her doing upon Romeo's antithetical exclamations under the most violent conflict of feelings produced by his hopeless passion for Rosaline—which she terms "descanting in *pretty* phrases." In this effusion of Juliet's, the fair critic finds only one of those "particular passages" in which her "*luxuriance of fancy* may seem to *wander into excess*."—"The warmth and vivacity of Juliet's fancy," she adds, "would naturally, under strong and unusual excitement, and in the conflict of opposing sentiments, run into some *extravagance* of diction." And to complete her illustration, she makes the same questionable sort of reference to Coleridge that we have already seen her making to Madame de Staël. She quotes a dozen lines from a part of his poetical writings which has not the remotest relation to the matter in hand—

"Perhaps 'tis *pretty*, to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other," &c.—

and adds, "These lines seem to me to form the *truest* comment on Juliet's *wild* exclamations against Romeo." Coleridge himself, on the contrary, thought with us, that this passage expresses "the audible struggle of the mind with itself." ('Lit. Rem.' ii, 156.) Only think, indeed, of the heart of Juliet, under this its direst trial, uttering mere *prettinesses!* The awfully rigorous *logic* of intense passion in a spirit wherein passion and intellect are equally great, is a thing which, in this writer's Shakespearian criticisms, we constantly find escaping her apprehension.

Upon his brow shame is asham'd to sit;
For 'tis a throne where honour may be crown'd
Sole monarch of the universal earth.—
Oh, what a beast was I, to chide at him!
Nurse. Will you speak well of him that kill'd your cousin?
Jul. Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?—
Ah, poor my lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,
When I, thy three-hours wife, have mangled it!

The struggle, however, is not yet over in her breast. She goes on—

But wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin?

And now that her mind can once find leisure to put this question to itself, it instantly and firmly grasps the true nature of the fact:—

That villain cousin would have kill'd my husband.—
Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring;
Your tributary drops belong to woe,
Which you, mistaking, offer up to joy.—
My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain;
And Tybalt's dead, that would have slain my husband;
All this is comfort——

This very comfort, however, serves but to deliver her over, like her bridegroom, to the one absorbing, desolating idea:—

Wherefore weep I, then?
Some word there was, worser than Tybalt's death,
That murder'd me: I would forget it fain;
But oh, it presses to my memory,
Like damned, guilty deeds to sinners' minds—
Tybalt is dead, and Romeo—banished.
That *banished*, that one word *banished*,
Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts—
. . . To speak that word,
Is father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,
All slain, all dead! *Romeo is banished*—
There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,
In that word's death—no words can that woe sound!

And now the Nurse, who, for her own part, would easily have reconciled herself to Romeo's total separation from her young mistress, once more feels her instinctive fondness worked upon by the excess of Juliet's desolation, to seek for her the only available relief:—

Hie to your chamber—I'll find Romeo
To comfort you.—I wot well where he is.
Hark ye, your Romeo will be here at night.—
I'll to him—he is hid at Laurence' cell.
Jul. Oh, find him! give this ring to my true knight,
And bid him come to take his last farewell.

That unison of feeling, through all its various fluctuations whether gentle or violent, which we have already pointed out as existing so remarkably between this pair, is forcibly indicated in the present instance by the simple words that follow between the Nurse and the Friar:—

Nurse. O holy friar, O tell me, holy friar,
Where is my lady's lord? where's Romeo?
Fri. There on the ground, with his own tears made drunk.
Nurse. Oh, he is even in my mistress' case,
Just in her case!
Fri. O woful sympathy!
Piteous predicament!

The following exclamations of Romeo, be it well observed, betray no consciousness whatever of guiltiness in the affair of the duel—excepting, indeed, that involuntary guilt, of bearing the name of one of the rival houses from whose bickerings his own superior nature had kept him alien:—

Rom. Spak'st thou of Juliet?—how is it with her?—
Doth she not think me an old murderer,
Now I have stain'd the childhood of our joy
With blood remov'd but little from her own?—
Where is she? and how doth she? and what says
My conceal'd lady to our cancell'd love?
Nurse. Oh, she says nothing, sir, but weeps and weeps;
And now falls on her bed; and then starts up,
And Tybalt calls; and then on Romeo cries,
And then down falls again.
Rom. As if that name,
Shot from the deadly level of a gun,
Did murder her, as that name's cursed hand
Murder'd her kinsman.——O tell me, friar, tell me,
In what vile part of this anatomy
Doth my name lodge?—tell me, that I may sack
The hateful mansion!

The Friar's long remonstrance and exhortation—

Hold thy desperate hand—
Art thou a man, &c.—

is all in vain. In vain does he add—

What, rouse thee, man! thy Juliet is alive,
For whose dear sake thou wast but lately dead;
There art thou happy: Tybalt would kill thee,
But thou slew'st Tybalt; there art thou happy too:
The law, that threaten'd death, becomes thy friend,
And turns it to exile; there art thou happy:
A pack of blessings lights upon thy back;
Happiness courts thee in her best array.

All this "happiness" goes for nothing with his pupil, until he comes to tell him in the end—

Go, get thee to thy love as was decreed;
Ascend her chamber; hence, and comfort her:
But look, thou stay not till the watch be set,
For then thou canst not pass to Mantua;
Where thou shalt live, till we can find a time
To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,
Beg pardon of the prince, and call thee back
With twenty hundred thousand times more joy
Than thou went'st forth in lamentation.

The storm is now allayed for the moment—and that moment, in the contemplation of the lovers, is eternity:—

Nurse. My lord, I'll tell my lady you will come.
Rom. Do so, and bid my sweet prepare to chide.
Nurse. Here, sir, a ring she bade me give you, sir.
Rom. How well my comfort is reviv'd by this!

If, under the desolating idea of present separation, they were unable to look beyond it for a happier future, well may they see no morrow to this night of their now assured union—the more so for the agonizing suspense which they have just gone through. However, the morrow comes inexorably, and with it their parting scene—respecting which it would be mere impertinence to offer a word of explanation to the reader, whom it can never fail to remind of that melodious unison which we have already remarked in the passages of their courtship and their nuptials:—

Jul. Wilt thou be gone!—It is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear;
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree;
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.
Rom. It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund Day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops:
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.
Jul. Yon light is not day-light, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to Mantua:
Therefore stay yet—thou need'st not to be gone!
Rom. Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say, yon grey is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads:
I have more care to stay than will to go;—
Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so.—
How is't, my soul?—let's talk—it is not day.
Jul. It is, it is—hie hence—be gone—away!
It is the lark, that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.
Some say, the lark makes sweet division;
This doth not so, for she divideth us!
Some say, the lark and loathed toad change eyes;
Oh, now I would they had chang'd voices too!—
Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,
Hunting thee hence with hunts-up to the day.
Oh, now be gone—more light and light it grows!
Rom. More light and light—more dark and dark our woes!
Nurse (entering). Madam!
Jul. Nurse?
Nurse. Your lady mother's coming to your chamber:
The day is broke; be wary, look about. [*Exit.*
Jul. Then, window, let day in, and let life out!
Rom. Farewell, farewell!—one kiss, and I'll descend.
Jul. Art thou gone so?—my love!—my lord!—my *friend!*
I must hear from thee every day i' the hour—
For in a minute there are many days:
Oh, by this count I shall be much in years,
Ere I again behold my Romeo!
Rom. Farewell!—I will omit no opportunity
That may convey my greetings, love, to thee.

Jul. Oh, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?
Rom. I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.
Jul. O God! I have an ill-divining soul:
Methinks, I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb:
Either my eye-sight fails, or thou look'st pale.
Rom. And trust me, love, in my eye so do you—
Dry sorrow drinks our blood.—Adieu! adieu!
Jul. O Fortune, Fortune! all men call thee fickle:
If thou art fickle, what dost thou with him
That is renown'd for faith? Be fickle, Fortune;
For then, I hope, thou wilt not keep him long,
But send him back!

7.—TRIALS AND HEROISM OF JULIET.

Romeo, in his exile, has only to sigh for their reunion. But upon Juliet a severer trial comes immediately. We have traced already that fearless outpouring of her heart to her lover—simply *forgetful* of parental authority—which contrasts so effectively with the sentiment of habitually quiet deference—

But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly—

which falls from the gentle girl, a stranger yet to passion, on her first appearance in the piece. We have now to mark the new-born spirit of the youthful wife taking full possession of Juliet's bosom, and finding new strength with each accumulation of external pressure, to resist the unfeeling imposition upon her, persevered in by her parents, of a husband whom her heart had rejected from the first. In the scene with her mother upon this subject, which instantly follows Romeo's departure—the first in which Lady Capulet and her daughter come together after Juliet's

first meeting with Romeo—we feel the no longer passive daughter, but the conscious wife, in the tone of the very first words that fall from Juliet's lips:—

> *Lady Cap. (within).* Ho, daughter! are you up?
> *Jul.* Who is't that calls? is it my lady mother?
> Is she not down so late, or up so early?
> What unaccustom'd cause procures her hither?
> *Lady Cap. (entering).* Why, how now, Juliet?
> *Jul.* Madam, I am not well, &c.

Still, the demand, in the first place, is only upon her power of dissembling her grief for Romeo's departure under the guise of lamentation for Tybalt's death—ending in her securing from her lady mother the permission, so very important to Romeo's safety, of tempering with her own hands the poison which Lady Capulet assures her, she will procure to be administered to "that same banish'd runagate," so that "he shall soon keep Tybalt company." But her mother's immediate announcement of the "sudden day of joy" which her father has appointed for her, arouses for the first time all the indignant wife within her bosom, though masked, in her words, under the show of simply maiden disinclination to the proposed suitor:—

> *Lady Cap.* Marry, my child, early next Thursday morn,
> The gallant, young, and noble gentleman,
> The county Paris, at Saint Peter's church,
> Shall happily make thee there a joyful bride!
> *Jul.* Now, by Saint Peter's church, and Peter too,
> He shall not make me there a joyful bride!
> I wonder at this haste—that I must wed
> Ere he, that should be husband, come to woo.
> I pray you, tell my lord and father, madam,
> I will not marry yet; and when I do, I swear,
> It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,
> Rather than Paris.—These are news indeed!
> *Lady Cap.* Here comes your father—tell him so yourself,
> And see how he will take it at your hands.

The following scene with her father demands the most careful attention, in order to judge with perfect justice of Juliet's conduct throughout. We shall see that his arbitrary violence of language is not called

forth by any open flying in the face of paternal authority on the part of his daughter. She simply and respectfully alleges her dislike to the man who is so peremptorily proposed to her for a husband. Her father had said to Paris at the outset:—

> Let two more summers wither in their pride,
> Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.
> . . . . .
> But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart;
> My will to her consent is but a part;
> An she agree, within her scope of choice
> Lies my consent and fair according voice.

And on the evening of the following day, after Tybalt's death, he tells the count:—

> Things have fallen out, sir, so unluckily,
> That we have had no time to move our daughter:
> Look you, she lov'd her kinsman Tybalt dearly,
> And so did I.——Well, we were born to die!——
> 'Tis very late—she'll not come down to-night;—
> I promise you, but for your company,
> I would have been a-bed an hour ago.

The county replies, addressing Lady Capulet—

> These times of woe afford no time to woo:
> Madam, good night—commend me to your daughter.

And her ladyship rejoins—

> I will, and know her mind early to-morrow;
> To-night she's mew'd up to her heaviness.

Up to this point, then, it appears that Juliet was to have had a mind of her own in the business. But all at once, old Capulet, finding, it should seem, this mourning matter very uncomfortable, resolves to have a wedding *at all events*, to make him cheerful; and so, at the very moment that the count is taking his leave, he declares to him, without further ceremony:—

> Sir Paris, I will make a desperate tender
> Of my child's love: I think, she will be rul'd
> In all respects by me; nay more, I doubt it not.——
> Wife, go you to her ere you go to bed;
> Acquaint her here of my son Paris' love;

And bid her, mark you me, on Wednesday next—
But, soft—what day is this?
Par. Monday, my lord.
Cap. Monday? ha, ha!—Well, Wednesday is too soon.—
O' Thursday let it be.—O' Thursday, tell her,
She shall be married to this noble earl.——
Will you be ready? do you like this haste?
We'll keep no great ado;—a friend or two;—
For, look you, Tybalt being slain so late,
It may be thought we held him carelessly,
Being our kinsman, if we revel much:
Therefore we'll have some half-a-dozen friends,
And there an end.——But what say you to Thursday?
Par. My lord, I would that Thursday were to-morrow.
Cap. Well, get you gone.—O' Thursday be it, then.——
Go you to Juliet ere you go to bed;
Prepare her, wife, against this wedding-day.——
Farewell, my lord.——Light to my chamber, ho!——
Afore me, it is so very late, that we
May call it early by-and-by.——Good night.

Instead of going quietly to bed, however, this considerate father, we see, takes it into his head to follow his lady into Juliet's chamber, in order to aid in that *preparation* of his daughter's mind, of which we have already quoted the unceremonious commencement. His own description of the weeping state in which he finds her—

How now? a conduit, girl? what, still in tears? &c.—

brings out in stronger relief the selfish, wilful, and tyrannical cold-heartedness of his following speeches:—

How now, wife?
Have you deliver'd to her our decree?
Lady Cap. Ay, sir; but she will none, she gives you thanks.
I would the fool were married to her grave!
Cap. Soft, take me with you, take me with you, wife:
How! will she none? doth she not give us thanks?
Is she not proud? Doth she not count her bless'd,
Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
So worthy a gentleman to be her bridegroom?
Jul. Not proud, you have; but thankful, that you have:
Proud can I never be of what I hate;
But thankful even for hate, that is meant love.

Cap. How now! how now, chop-logick! What is this?—
Proud,—and, I thank you,—and, I thank you not;—
And yet not proud.——Mistress minion, you,
Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
But settle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,
To go with Paris to Saint Peter's church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.——
Out, you green-sickness carrion! out, you baggage!
You tallow-face!
Lady Cap. (to Juliet). Fye, fye!—what, are you mad?
Jul. Good father, I beseech you on my knees,
Hear me with patience but to speak a word.
Cap. Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch!
I tell thee what,—get thee to church o' Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face:
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me—
My fingers itch.——Wife, we scarce thought us bless'd,
That God had sent us but this only child;
But now I see this one is one too much,
And that we have a curse in having her:
Out on her, hilding!
Nurse. God in heaven bless her!—
You are to blame, my lord, to rate her so.
Cap. And why, my lady wisdom?—hold your tongue,
Good prudence; smatter with your gossips, go.
Nurse. I speak no treason.
Cap. Oh, Gud ye good den.
Nurse. May not one speak?
Cap. Peace, you mumbling fool!
Utter your gravity o'er a gossip's bowl,
For here we need it not.
Lady Cap. You are too hot.
Cap. God's bread! it makes me mad! Day, night, late, early,
At home, abroad, alone, in company,
Waking, or sleeping, still my care hath been
To have her match'd: and having now provided
A gentleman of princely parentage,
Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly train'd,
Stuff'd (as they say) with honourable parts,
Proportion'd as one's heart could wish a man,—
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,
To answer—*I'll not wed,—I cannot love,—*
I am too young,—I pray you, pardon me.——
But, an you will not wed, I'll pardon you:
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me:
Look to't, think on't—I do not use to jest:
Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise:

An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die i' the streets,
For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
Nor what is mine shall never do thee good:
Trust to't, bethink you, *I'll not be forsworn.* [*Exit.*

This scene is usually regarded as if, under the circumstances as they appear to old Capulet, there were no peculiar cruelty in this behaviour to his daughter—as if it were made so to her feelings purely by the fact, known only to herself, of her attachment and union to Romeo. Coleridge himself simply talks of the "mistake" which the father makes in this last speech, "as if the causes of love were capable of being generalised."* But this view of the matter is importantly inadequate. We have shown already, that an ideally perfect sympathy of native character between the hero and heroine, is made by the poet as essential an element of their union, as the reciprocity of their passion itself. To this unison of character he has given a more vivid relief by the contrast in which he has placed it with every previous association of the heroine especially. Capulet's regard for his daughter is most exclusively selfish and unfeeling—he regards her as neither more nor less than an article of *property*, to be kept as a plaything for his capricious vanity, or disposed of to his honour and glory. He was loth to part with her until, as we have seen, this funeral of Tybalt's came to make him so dismal that he found there was nothing but a wedding could cheer his heart. We now see, it was no consideration for his daughter's welfare, but mere selfish hypocrisy, that had made him, to Paris's observation,

Younger than she are happy mothers made,

reply,

And too soon marr'd are those so early made.

Within two days he discovers that she is perfectly "ripe to be a bride." The development of his hard and tyrannic brutality attains its climax in his farewell

* 'Lit. Rem.' vol. ii. p. 157.

speech above quoted—and that quite independently of the fact of her own clandestine contract. It is not merely that he is ignorant of this—not merely that he is utterly incapable of understanding his daughter's nature or conceiving of her feelings at all—but that, in his arbitrary selfishness, he is totally indifferent to *any* feeling, to *any* happiness of hers. Now, therefore, the conscious wife, we find, feels, and justly feels, that he has severed the last link of attachment to him in her bosom.

She clings but the more eagerly to her remaining chance of parental sympathy and pity:—

> Is there no pity sitting in the clouds,
> That sees into the bottom of my grief?——
> Oh, sweet my *mother*, cast me not away!
> Delay this marriage for a month—a week—
> Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed
> In that dim monument where Tybalt lies!

But Lady Capulet, in this matter, proves herself to the last the exact counterpart of her husband:—

> Talk not to me, for I'll not speak a word;
> Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee. [*Exit.*

One old familiar tie yet remains unbroken, and becomes her next resource:—

> O God!——O *nurse!* how shall this be prevented?
> My husband is on earth, my faith in heaven;
> How shall that faith return again to earth,
> Unless that husband send it me from heaven
> By leaving earth?——Comfort me—counsel me——
> Alack, that heaven should practise stratagems
> Upon so soft a subject as myself!——
> What say'st thou?—hast thou not a word of joy?—
> Some comfort, nurse!——

And now is Juliet to have, for the first time, the bitter experience that there are occasions when, to a refined and noble spirit, the very kindness of a vulgar soul is more afflicting than its cruelty would be. The fond foster-mother desires above all things, according to her gross comprehension, the happiness of her darling foster-child. Being as incapable of entering into the

spirit of an individual attachment as Juliet is of conceiving any other, and having ever thought her mistaken in preferring Romeo to Paris, the Nurse *bonâ-fide* regards this banishment of Juliet's husband as a providential occasion for completing the dear girl's felicity. In this spirit it is—not that of mere "timeserving," as Mrs. Jameson tells us, and because she is "fearful lest her share in these events should be discovered"*—that the old woman proceeds, in answer to Juliet's last eager adjuration—"Some comfort, nurse!"—to give her counsel accordingly:—

'Faith, here 'tis. Romeo
Is banished; and all the world to nothing,
That he dares ne'er come back to challenge you;
Or, if he do, it needs must be by stealth.
Then, since the case so stands as now it doth,
I think it best you married with the County.
Oh, he's a lovely gentleman!—
Romeo's a dishclout to him.—An eagle, madam,
Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye,
As Paris hath. Beshrew my very heart,
I think you are happy in this second match,
For it excels your first: or if it did not,
Your first is dead; or 'twere as good he were,
As living here and you no use of him.
Jul. Speakest thou from thy heart?
Nurse. From my soul too,
Or else beshrew them both.
Jul. Amen!
Nurse. To what?

Now comes the master confutation of the notion maintained by Mrs. Jameson, and yet graver writers, of disproportion in this heroine's character. Had intellect and will in her been, as they assert, inferior to sensibility and imagination, she must here have sunk into helplessness or rushed into frenzy. But she does neither—the simple truth being that, as in Romeo we have the original stuff of a Hamlet, so in Juliet we have the germ of an Imogen herself. We find, therefore, neither sinking nor raving at this unexpected failure of her last domestic reliance, and extinction of

* 'Characteristics,' &c., 3rd edit. vol. i. p. 185-6.

her earliest and most fondly rooted confidence. Clear and bright apprehension, cool and concentrated resolve, and these alone, dictate her parting words to her oldest acquaintance:—

> Well, thou hast comforted me marvellous much.
> Go in, and tell my lady, I am gone,
> Having displeas'd my father, to Laurence' cell,
> To make confession, and to be absolv'd.
> *Nurse.* Marry, I will—and this is wisely done.

The necessity of instantly dissembling with her old confidant, had flashed at once upon Juliet's conviction: it is not until the Nurse is out of hearing, that her overcharged heart relieves itself by exclaiming:—

> Ancient damnation!—O most wicked fiend!—
> Is it more sin, to wish me thus forsworn,
> Or to dispraise my lord with that same tongue
> Which she hath prais'd him with above compare
> So many thousand times?——Go, counsellor;
> Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain:—
> I'll to the friar, to know his remedy;
> *If all else fail, myself have power to die.*

One afflicting circumstance has yet to be added, to complete the oppressiveness of Juliet's present position—the encountering her ungenerous and now hated suitor at that very cell of her spiritual father, to which she repairs as her last resource for counsel in her dire extremity. Her temporal father's parting speech above cited, wherein he tells her so feelingly, with reference to the County's proposal—

> If you be mine, I'll give you to my friend, &c.—

has a fitting sequel in the "lovely gentleman's" portion of the following inimitable scene, in considering which the reader should not fail to remember the peculiarly galling contrast which it must present, in Juliet's mind, to that parallel scene with Romeo which she has so recently enjoyed on the very same spot:—

> *Friar L.* On Thursday, sir?—the time is very short.
> *Paris.* My father Capulet will have it so;
> And I am nothing slow, to slack his haste.

Fri. You say, you do not know the lady's mind;
Uneven is the course, I like it not.
Par. Immoderately she weeps for Tybalt's death,
And therefore have I little talk'd of love;
For Venus smiles not in a house of tears.
Now, sir, her father counts it dangerous,
That she doth give her sorrow so much sway;
And in his wisdom hastes our marriage,
To stop the inundation of her tears;
Which, too much minded by herself alone,
May be put from her by society:
Now do you know the reason of this haste.
Fri. I would I knew not why it should be slow'd. [*Aside.*
Look, sir, here comes the lady towards my cell.
Par. Happily met, my lady, and my wife!
Jul. That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.
Par. That may be, must be, love, on Thursday next.
Jul. What must be, shall be.
Fri. That's a certain text.
Par. Come you to make confession to this father?
Jul. To answer that, were to confess to you.
Par. Do not deny to him, that you love me.
Jul. I will confess to you, that I love him.
Par. So will you, I am sure, that you love me.
Jul. If I do so, it will be of more price
Being spoke behind your back, than to your face.
Par. Poor soul, thy face is much abus'd with tears.
Jul. The tears have got small victory by that,
For it was bad enough before their spite.
Par. Thou wrong'st it, more than tears, with that report.
Jul. That is no slander, sir, that is a truth;
And what I spake, I spake it to my face.
Par. Thy face is mine, and thou hast slander'd it.
Jul. It may be so, for it is not mine own.——
Are you at leisure, holy father, now;
Or shall I come to you at evening mass?
Fri. My leisure serves me, pensive daughter, now.——
My lord, we must entreat the time alone.
Par. God shield I should disturb devotion!——
Juliet, on Thursday early will I rouse you:
Till then, adieu! and keep this holy kiss.

How admirably does this persecuting impertinence, thus carried to the highest point, wind up the heroine's anguish to that pitch of intensity which bursts forth in her appeal to her confessor, so soon as the door is closed upon the heartless intruder—though her intellect, still keeping the ascendant, guides every syllable

of its expression, unerringly, towards the one end which absorbs her—to draw promptly from the Friar some means of avoiding the odious nuptials:—

Jul. Oh, shut the door! and when thou hast done so,
Come weep with me—past hope, past cure, past help!
Fri. Ah, Juliet, I already know thy grief;
It strains me past the compass of my wits;
I hear thou must, and nothing must prorogue it,
On Thursday next be married to this County.
Jul. Tell me not, friar, that thou hear'st of this,
Unless thou tell me how I may prevent it:
If, in thy wisdom, thou canst give no help,
Do thou but call my resolution wise,
And with this knife I'll help it presently.
God join'd my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands;
And ere this hand, by thee to Romeo seal'd,
Shall be the label to another deed,
Or my true heart with treacherous revolt
Turn to another, this shall slay them both:
Therefore, out of thy long-experienc'd time,
Give me some present counsel; or, behold,
'Twixt my extremes and me this bloody knife
Shall play the umpire, arbitrating that
Which the commission of thy years and art
Could to no issue of true honour bring.——
Be not so long to speak—I long to die,
If what thou speak'st speak not of remedy.

The forcible expression thus given to her courageous firmness of resolve, has immediately the effect which she is seeking: it encourages the Friar to hint at the one desperate, yet, as he esteems it, sure expedient which alone presents itself to his mind:—

Hold, daughter; I do spy a kind of hope,
Which craves as desperate an execution
As that is desperate which we would prevent.
If, rather than to marry county Paris,
Thou hast the strength of will to slay thyself,
Then is it likely thou wilt undertake
A thing like death to chide away this shame,
That cop'st with death himself to 'scape from it;
And, if thou dar'st, I'll give thee remedy.

It is quite a mistake to suppose, with Mrs. Jameson, that, in Juliet's instant reply, her "shaping spirit of imagination" merely "heaps together all images of

horror that ever hung upon a troubled dream."* The Friar, still trying her courage, has here offered her the dismal suggestion that his proposed "remedy" would require her to "undertake a thing like death;" and it is her perfectly rational eagerness to make him disclose this remedy, how terrible soever, that prompts her to conceive and express one fearful mode of escape after another, each one more horrible than the former, until she reaches that very climax of horror-despising resolution which the expedient he has to propose to her demands:—

> O bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
> From off the battlements of yonder tower;
> Or walk in thievish ways; or bid me lurk
> Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears;
> Or shut me nightly in a charnel-house,
> O'er-cover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones,
> With reeky shanks, and yellow chapless skulls;
> Or bid me go into a new-made grave,
> And hide me with a dead man in his shroud;
> Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble;
> And I will do it without fear or doubt,
> To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love!

Thus finding her resolution terror-proof, he ventures at once to subject her to the further trial of listening to the chilling detail of that simulated death and actual sepulture which she must consent to undergo:—

> Hold, then—go home, be merry, give consent
> To marry Paris: Wednesday is to-morrow;
> To-morrow night look that thou lie alone,
> Let not thy nurse lie with thee in thy chamber:
> Take thou this phial, being then in bed,
> And this distilled liquor drink thou off:
> When, presently, through all thy veins shall run
> A cold and drowsy humour, which shall seize
> Each vital spirit; for no pulse shall keep
> His natural progress, but surcease to beat;
> No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou liv'st;
> The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
> To paly ashes; thy eyes' windows fall,
> Like death when he shuts up the day of life;

* 'Characteristics,' &c., vol. i. p. 194.

Each part, depriv'd of supple government,
Shall stiff, and stark, and cold, appear like death:
And in this borrow'd likeness of shrunk death
Thou shalt remain full two-and-forty hours,
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.
Now, when the bridegroom in the morning comes
To rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead:
Then (as the manner of our country is),
In thy best robes uncover'd on the bier,
Thou shalt be borne to that same antient vault
Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie.
In the mean time, against thou shalt awake,
Shall Romeo by my letters know our drift;
And hither shall he come; and he and I
Will watch thy waking, and that very night
Shall Romeo bear thee hence to Mantua.
And this shall free thee from this present shame,
If no unconstant toy, nor womanish fear,
Abate thy valour in the acting it.
Jul. Give me, O give me!—tell me not of fear.
Fri. Hold—get you gone, be strong and prosperous
In this resolve: I'll send a friar with speed
To Mantua, with my letters to thy lord.
Jul. Love, give me strength! and strength shall help afford.
Farewell, dear father!

And so, she goes off to use the means of her deliverance from the threatened marriage, with no less buoyant ardour than she had exclaimed "Hie to high fortune!" when hastening to her chosen nuptials. Escape from Paris to reunion with Romeo!—The intervening charnel-house may well appear to her as nothing!

But when—after the brief scene of simulation with her parents, which she enacts with such perfect self-possession, instructed by her confessor and inspired by that power of Love which she has invoked—she comes to find herself alone in her chamber, in the silence of night, and in presence only of the fearful act which she has to perform,—the very clearness and completeness with which her mind embraces her present position, make her pass in lucid review, and in the most natural and logical sequence, the several dismal contingencies that may await her. This being

one of the passages most constantly misinterpreted to the disparagement of the heroine and the poet, it behoves us to expound it very particularly—exhibiting as it does her powers of imagination, of judgment, and of will, operating *each* in the utmost vigour, and *all* in perfect harmony:—

> Farewell!—God knows when we shall meet again!—
> I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
> That almost freezes up the heat of life.—
> I'll call them back again to comfort me.——
> Nurse!——What should she do here?
> My dismal scene I needs must act alone!—
> Come, phial.——

And first, she considers—

> What if this mixture do not work at all?
> Must I of force be married to the County?

This possibility is instantly provided for, and finally disposed of, as she grasps the dagger—

> No, no—this shall forbid it—lie thou there.

Next presents itself the very natural conception—

> What if it be a poison, which the friar
> Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
> Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
> Because he married me before to Romeo?
> I fear, it is.

This suspicion, however, she dismisses immediately, for a reason clear and adequate, as the whole tenour of the drama shews us—

> And yet, methinks, it should not,
> For *he hath still been tried a holy man;*
> I will not entertain so bad a thought.

One other contingency alone remains for her contemplation, but that one is the most fearful of all—

> How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
> I wake before the time that Romeo
> Come to redeem me?—there's a fearful point!

Here it is most important to be on our guard against the ordinary critical notion that, in her following series of horrid anticipations, it is quite arbitrarily

that "her vivid fancy conjures up," Mrs. Jameson says, "one terrible apprehension after another."* The more we examine them, the more we find them to have the strictest logical relation to the circumstances of the case. What more rational, for instance, than the first of these suppositions?—

> Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
> To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
> And so die strangled ere my Romeo comes?

Then, putting the other possible case—

> Or, if I live, &c.—

what can be more consequentially made out than the whole following train of inference, and succession of horrible anticipations—wherein there is not the smallest circumstance "conjured up" by the arbitrary power of fancy, but every one belongs of strict necessity, either to the actual interior of the particular charnel-house to which she is consigning herself, or to the firmly-rooted faith regarding its preternatural concomitants:—

> Is it not very like,
> The horrible conceit of death and night,
> Together with the terror of the place,—
> As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
> Where, for these many hundred years, the bones
> Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd,—
> Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,
> Lies fest'ring in his shroud,—where, as they say,
> At some hours in the night, spirits resort;—
> Alack, alack! is it not like, that I,
> So early waking,—what with loathsome smells,
> And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,
> That living mortals, hearing them, run mad;—
> Oh, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
> Environed with all these hideous fears?—
> And madly play with my forefathers' joints?—
> And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?—
> And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
> As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?

In all this, Mrs. Jameson sees only that, "gradually, and most naturally, in such a mind once *thrown off*

* 'Characteristics,' &c., 3rd edit., vol. i. p. 195.

its poise, the horror rises to *frenzy*—her imagination realizes *its own hideous creations*." * On the contrary, as we have shown, it is the invincible *equipoise* of her stimulated faculties and feelings, that leads her up, step by step, to this climax of the accumulated horrors, not which she *may*, but which she *must* encounter if she wake before the calculated moment. Their pressure on her brain, crowned by the vivid apprehension of *anticipated* frenzy, does indeed, amid her dim and silent loneliness, produce the momentary hallucination—

> Oh, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
> Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
> Upon a rapier's point.—Stay, Tybalt, stay!

But she instantly recovers herself, recognizes the illusion—which, however, has served to bring back her exiled husband's image more vividly than ever to her mind and heart,—and with calm resolve, in face of the fearful contingency which she has, not *fancied*, but simply *pictured* to herself, and sees to be inevitable as it is horrible, she embraces the one chance of earthly reunion with her lord—

> Romeo, I come!—this do I drink to thee.

Coleridge has given, in so emphatic a manner, the sanction of his justly influential name to so vital a misconception of the spirit of this important passage, that we ought not to proceed without distinctly pointing it out. "Shakespeare," says he on this occasion, "provides for the finest decencies. It would have been too bold a thing for a girl of fifteen;—but she swallows the draught in a fit of fright." † Surely, some commonplace stage association must here have interfered (as has happened so frequently with other Shakespearian expositors) to disturb the clearness and firmness of the critic's judgment even upon the poet's text. Otherwise, it seems truly inconceivable, that

* 'Characteristics,' &c., 3rd edit., vol. i. p. 195.
† 'Lit. Rem.,' vol. ii. p. 157.

he should have delivered such an opinion after considering the series of scenes we have just been examining, from the moment when Juliet shews herself equal to the resolve—

If all else fail, myself have power to die.

What is there in her swallowing the draught calmly after all, but the natural, the *necessary* climax to that ascending scale of enthusiastically dauntless heroism through which we have beheld her passing so rapidly yet so steadily? How could a critic with Coleridge's acumen, so totally miss the leading spirit of this tragedy, as not to perceive that it finds its heroine the *timid girl* for the very purpose of leaving her the *heroic woman*, by the expanding agency of sympathetic Love upon her noble and exquisite nature? This notion of childish fright as necessary to make her do so "bold a thing" as take the potion, is too much like Mrs. Jameson's finding, in her invocation to Night, "something so almost infantine in her perfect simplicity,"—and telling us of her revival in the tomb, that "she wakes like a sweet child who has been dreaming of something promised to it by its mother, and opens her eyes to ask for it."*

Next to exposing gross distortions of our poet's great creations, it seems to us that there is nothing which it more behoves us to combat, than this continual tendency of our modern English criticism to degrade his noblest developments of feminine nature to a petty and a childish standard. From Love especially, he knew that woman draws more heroism even than man himself. We find this constantly in Shakespeare, because he found it in that "Nature" to which he was ever seeking "to hold up" the poetic "mirror." And in the particular character and scene that we are here considering, we find the most signal example of love-inspired heroism in woman that even he has placed before us.

The same want of insight into the inmost spirit

* 'Characteristics,' &c., 3rd edit., vol. i. pp. 193, 201.

of this tragedy, and especially into that elevation of character assigned to its heroine, which the poet has exhibited the more effectively by shewing it insulated from all sympathy but that of her lover, has betrayed Coleridge into speaking of the scene of lamentation which follows the discovery of Juliet in her trance, as being "perhaps excusable."

"But," he continues, "it is a strong warning to minor dramatists not to introduce at one time many separate characters agitated by one and the same circumstance. It is difficult to understand what effect, whether that of pity or of laughter, Shakespeare meant to produce;—the occasion and the characteristic speeches are so little in harmony. For example, what the Nurse says is excellently suited to the Nurse's character, but grotesquely unsuited to the occasion."*

Had Coleridge traced, as we have here been doing, the total absence of sympathetic feeling towards Juliet in life, on the part of every one of those who should most naturally have entertained it, he would have been at no loss to perceive that the monotony of tone in which the same people bewail her seeming death, but gives the finishing-stroke to the same portraiture of their selfishness. The grief of each one of them is devoid of any drop of genuine pity — it is felt purely for the calamity which has befallen *themselves*, — whether we contemplate the Nurse calling out for her grand consoler, *aqua-vitæ*,—or the parents and the suitor with the heartless chime of their half-howling, half-whining exclamations—so monotonous, simply because, not the generous feeling, but the want of it, is identical in each:—

Lady Cap. Accurs'd, unhappy, wretched, hateful day!
Most miserable hour, that e'er Time saw
In lasting labour of his pilgrimage!

Nurse. Oh woe! O woful, woful, woful day!
Most lamentable day! most woful day,
That ever, ever, I did yet behold!

Par. Beguil'd, divorced, wronged, spited, slain!
Most détestable Death, by thee beguil'd,

* 'Lit. Rem.,' vol. ii. p. 157.

By cruel, cruel thee quite overthrown!

. . . . . .

Cap. Despis'd, distressed, hated, martyr'd, kill'd!—
Uncomfortable time! why cam'st thou now
To murder, murder our solemnity?

All this, indeed, may well, as Coleridge suggests, move a laugh in the auditor—but it is a bitter laugh, and an instructive one—till we are restored to gravity by the worthy Friar's interposition; who, both knowing Juliet and knowing her deplorers, rebukes them so justly and so significantly:—

Peace, ho, for shame! confusion's cure lives not
In these confusions.

. . . . . .

The heavens do low'r upon you, for some ill;
Move them no more, by crossing their high will.

Even the following scene of mutual banter between the Nurse's man Peter and the musicians, with whom the whole matter resolves itself into "'Faith, we may put up our pipes and be gone," and "Come, we'll in here, tarry for the mourners, and stay dinner," but completes the picture of comparative indifference in all about her to Juliet's happiness and fate, which prepares us for the more lively appreciation of Romeo's intensely and exquisitely sympathetic effusions and conduct on the same occasion,—when the care of Friar Laurence, that visible Providence of the lovers, after triumphing over those two first blows of their fortune, the duel with Tybalt and the threatened marriage with Paris, is defeated by the unlucky detention of the messenger bearing his letter of explanation to Romeo, and the arrival of the servant of the latter, acquainting his master with the seeming fact.

8.—REUNION OF THE LOVERS.—TRIUMPH OF LOVE.—CONCLUDING REFLECTION.

On the other hand, how exquisitely does the following soliloquy of Romeo, in his exile, express to us the opposite state of *his* mind, absorbed in the recollection of his last meeting and parting with his bride, and so feeding wholly upon blissful memory and hope:—

> If I may trust the flattering eye of sleep,
> My dreams presage some joyful news at hand:
> My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne;
> And, all this day, an unaccustom'd spirit
> Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.
> I dreamt, my lady came and found me dead
> (Strange dream! that gives a dead man leave to think),
> And breath'd such life with kisses in my lips,
> That I reviv'd, and was an emperor.
> Ah me! how sweet is love itself possess'd,
> When but love's shadows are so rich in joy!

Reunion with his Juliet, we see, is his one engrossing idea, his one exclusive aspiration. His servant suddenly brings him intelligence of his lady's death and burial. His aspiration remains unaltered—it is still reunion with Juliet; only, now, suspense is changed into certainty—wish into resolve:—

> Is it even so?—then I defy you, stars!——
> Thou know'st my lodging—get me ink and paper,
> And hire post-horses—I will hence to-night.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee to-night!——
> Let's see for means.——O mischief, thou art swift
> To enter in the thoughts of desperate men!—
> I do remember an apothecary, &c.

The famous passage of description which follows, has been spoken of, by Coleridge* amongst others, as

* 'Lit. Rem.,' vol. i. p. 158.

being justified, on such an occasion, chiefly by its *poetic* beauty. This, however, is a great mistaking of Shakespeare's *dramatic* spirit. It is in earnest pursuit of his immediate purpose—to procure the means of self-destruction—that Romeo is led to glance rapidly over the picture of that "penury" which lately "noting" he had said to himself—

> An if a man did need a poison now,
> Whose sale is present death in Mantua,*
> Here lives a caitiff wretch would sell it him.

The same steady earnestness of purpose pervades every line of his dialogue with the Apothecary himself. Although,

> Being holiday, the beggar's shop is shut,

yet he proceeds at once to make his application, confident that the idea of a providential customer must bring the starving shopkeeper forth at his summons:—

> What, ho! apothecary!
> *Ap.* ,, Who calls so loud?
> *Rom.* Come hither, man.—I see that thou art poor.—
> Hold, there is forty ducats.—Let me have
> A dram of poison—such soon-speeding geer
> As will disperse itself through all the veins,
> That the life-weary taker may fall dead;
> And that the trunk may be discharg'd of breath
> As violently, as hasty powder fir'd
> Doth hurry from the fatal cannon's womb.
> *Ap.* Such mortal drugs I have; but Mantua's law
> Is death to any he, that utters them.
> *Rom.* Art thou so bare, and full of wretchedness,
> And fear'st to die? Famine is in thy cheeks,
> Need and oppression stareth in thy eyes,
> Upon thy back hangs ragged misery;
> The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law;

* Not "Whose sale *were* present death in Mantua," as it is constantly given in the "acting play." This is one of those seemingly slight verbal alterations which involve an essential perversion of the meaning of a passage. Romeo is in no state of mind to be idly speculating upon *contingent* obstacles, as we see that even Coleridge suspects him of doing. It is his knowledge that the sale of poisons is *certainly* prohibited in Mantua by a standing law, that gives to his descriptive soliloquy that perfect *dramatic* propriety which has been somewhat idly though very generally contested.

The world affords no law to make thee rich;
Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.
Ap. My poverty, but not my will, consents.
Rom. I *pray* thy poverty,* and not thy will.
Ap. Put this in any liquid thing you will,
And drink it off; and, if you had the strength
Of twenty men, it would despatch you straight.
Rom. There is thy gold—worse poison to men's souls,
Doing more murders in this loathsome world,
Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell;
I sell thee poison, thou hast sold me none.—
Farewell—buy food, and get thyself in flesh.——
Come, cordial, and not poison—go with me
To Juliet's grave, for there must I use thee!

In all this scene, the tenacious clinging to life which mere physical destitution commonly exhibits, throws into more prominent relief that eager longing for death which attends the pure desolation of the heart. To lie in "Juliet's grave," we see, is Romeo's one unvarying end and purpose, to which every syllable of his well-argued pleading with the apothecary is strictly subservient.

The same determined coolness of a deliberate and inexorable resolve—arguing strength, not weakness, of character—firmness, not rashness—comes out more strikingly and intensely, as the moment of its fulfilment approaches, in the parting scene with his servant Balthasar, at the burial-place of the Capulets:—

Give me that mattock, and the wrenching-iron.——
Hold, take this letter; early in the morning
See thou deliver it to my lord and father.——
Give me the light.——Upon thy life I charge thee,
Whate'er thou hear'st or seest, stand all aloof,
And do not interrupt me in my course.——
Why I descend into this bed of death,

* Not "I *pay* thy poverty," as we always hear it so emphatically delivered on the stage,—as it is printed in most later editions,—and, we regret to see, is retained by Mr. Collier; while Mr. Knight very properly restores the reading of the second quarto and the first folio. Even without such strong documentary support, the first suggestion of the word *pray*, in this context, should have procured its adoption by every editor. The relation here is between Romeo's *earnestly repeated prayer* and the apothecary's *consent*: the moment for *paying* him is not yet arrived.

Is, partly, to behold my lady's face;
But chiefly, to take thence from her dead finger
A precious ring—a ring that I must use
In dear employment.——Therefore, hence, begone.——
But if thou, jealous, dost return to pry
In what I further shall intend to do,—
By heaven, I will tear thee joint by joint,
And strew this hungry churchyard with thy limbs:
The time, and my intents, are savage-wild,
More fierce and more inexorable far
Than empty tigers, or the roaring sea!
Bal. I will be gone, sir, and not trouble you.
Rom. So shalt thou shew me friendship.——Take thou that:
Live, and be prosperous; and farewell, good fellow.

But this fatal fixedness of purpose exhibits itself most intensely of all in the scene that immediately follows with Paris, whom we find again thrusting himself where he has no business. How expressively are the two respective modes contrasted, in which the would-be husband and the real one regard their lady's sepulchre. The self-complacent prettiness of the count's

Sweet flower, with flowers I strew thy bridal bed;
Sweet tomb, that in thy circuit dost contain
The perfect model of eternity, &c.

sets off most admirably the passionate despair of Romeo's ensuing apostrophe, while breaking open the vault:—

Thou détestable maw, thou womb of death,
Gorg'd with the dearest morsel of the earth,
Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,
And, in despite, I'll cram thee with more food!

But most effectively of all is the intensity of this final aspiration shown, in its struggle with and triumph over that inherent tenderness and generosity of the hero's nature which make him so earnestly conjure the intruding youth, whose identity he does not yet recognize, to molest him no further. With what consummate art does the following passage portray to us that impatient strife in his bosom, between the apprehension of being interrupted in his final irrevo-

cable act, and his reluctance to another deed of bloodshed:—

Par. Stay thy unhallow'd toil, vile Montague!
Can vengeance be pursued further than death?—
Condemned villain, I do apprehend thee:
Obey, and go with me; for thou must die.
Rom. I must indeed, and therefore came I hither.——
Good gentle youth, tempt not a desperate man!—
Fly hence and leave me.—Think upon these gone—
Let them affright thee.—I beseech thee, youth,
Heap not another sin upon my head,
By urging me to fury.——Oh, be gone!
By heaven, I love thee better than myself;
For I came hither arm'd against myself.——
Stay not—be gone—live, and hereafter say,
A madman's mercy bade thee run away!
Par. I do defy thy conjurations,
And do attach thee as a felon here.
Rom. Wilt thou provoke me?—then, have at thee, boy!
. . . . . .
Par. Oh, I am slain!——If thou be merciful,
Open the tomb, lay me with Juliet.
Rom. In faith, I will.——

The obtrusive impertinence of this same county Paris, we see, is immortal, since it extends even into the tomb. That is the best that can be said for it. One must at least admire its invincible pertinacity;—at the same time that we, the auditory, who have witnessed his becoming the heartless instrument of the heroine's extremest torment, cannot but find our irritated feelings consoled by the fact that he receives his punishment at the hand which has the greatest right to inflict it. Romeo, however, has no cognizance of the offensive part which his antagonist has been acting towards his bride; and therefore, conformably to his nature, his exclamations over the corpse of Paris, when he has recognized him, are simply an effusion of the tenderest pity:—

Let me peruse this face.——
Mercutio's kinsman! noble county Paris!——
What said my man, when my betossed soul
Did not attend him as we rode?—I think
He told me, Paris should have married Juliet.—

Said he not so? or did I dream it so?
Or am I mad, hearing him talk of Juliet,
To think it was so?——Oh, give me thy hand,
One writ with me in sour misfortune's book!—
I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave—
A grave?—oh no, a lantern, slaughter'd youth,
For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light!——
Death, lie thou there, by a dead man interr'd!

And now, for the first time since the morrow of their nuptials, he turns to gaze on Juliet; whose beauty, he has told us, makes the dark charnel-vault appear to him bright as a lighted banquet-room. On the point of her revival, "the roses" in her "lips and cheeks" have already replaced the "paly ashes" which the operation of the sleeping-draught had substituted for them. This little circumstance gives the crowning pathos to the scene; since it at once announces to the auditor her approaching resurrection, and lures her husband, as it were, the more seductively to his last fatal act:—

How oft, when men are at the point of death,
Have they been merry,* which their keepers call
A light'ning before death.——Oh, how may I
Call this a light'ning!——Oh, my love, my wife,
Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty—
Thou art not conquer'd—Beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And Death's pale flag is not advanced there!

Then comes the crowning instance of the hero's native gentleness and generosity, in his parting words to the corpse of the very man whose brutal malevolence has forced him into all this train of suffering:—

Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?—
Oh, what more favour can I do to thee,
Than, with that hand that cut thy youth in twain,
To sunder his that was thine enemy!—
Forgive me, cousin!

And now, two images alone remain to his contem-

* *Merry*—that is, *cheerful.*

plation in this world—his lifeless lady before him, and the death-giving potion in his hand—the latter his means of reunion with the former. Well may he, in embracing it, experience and express the very luxury of suicide!—

> Ah, dear Juliet,
> Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
> That unsubstantial Death is amorous,
> And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
> Thee here in dark to be his paramour?——
> For fear of that, I will still stay with thee,
> And never from this palace of dim Night
> Depart again.—Here, here will I remain,
> With worms that are thy chambermaids.—Oh, here
> Will I set up my everlasting rest,
> And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh!——Eyes, look your last!—
> Arms, take your last embrace!—and lips, O you,
> The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
> A dateless bargain to engrossing Death!——
> Come, bitter conduct—come, unsavoury guide!—
> Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
> The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!—
> Here's to my love!——O true apothecary,
> Thy drugs are quick.—Thus with a kiss I die!

Here two observations naturally present themselves.—First, that since the leading dramatic interest regarding Romeo in this life, attaches to the invincible constancy of his love, of which he has now given us the crowning proof,—it would have been a great mistake in the dramatist, had he sought, like his *improvers*, to extend that interest one moment further.—Secondly, that the art of the poet is exquisitely shown in thus veiling, under the voluptuousness of sentiment in the hero towards the unimpaired beauty of his bride, and the instantaneousness of the means of death which he employs, the merely physical repulsiveness of an act of self-destruction to the senses of the auditor and the apprehension of the reader.

The same unerring instinct has made him, for the like reason, limit the surviving moments of Juliet after her awakening, to the briefest possible space. "Romeo, I come," was the word with which she sank

into her trance; "Where is my Romeo?" is that with which she rises out of it:—

Fri. L. Ah, what an unkind hour
Is guilty of this lamentable chance!——
The lady stirs.
Jul. Oh, comfortable friar! where is my lord?—
I do remember well where I should be,
And there I am.—Where is my Romeo? [*Noise within.*
Fri. I hear some noise.——Lady, come from that nest
Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep;
A greater Power than we can contradict,
Hath thwarted our intents.—Come, come away;
Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead,
And Paris too.—Come, I'll dispose of thee
Among a sisterhood of holy nuns.—
Stay not to question, for the watch is coming.——
Come,—go, good Juliet! [*Noise again.*] I dare stay no longer. [*Exit.*

Alas! poor, kind, simple Friar Laurence! A sisterhood of holy nuns, indeed! No—we, the attentive auditory, know full well what alone remains for Juliet—what alone we desire for her. The Friar's announcement to her, like the servant's announcement to Romeo, leaves her but one care, but one aspiration! She stays—not, indeed, "to question"—for the one fact that interests her is all too plain—and what has she more to learn upon this earth!—

Go, get thee hence, for I will not away.——
What's here?—a cup, clos'd in my true love's hand?—
Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end.—
O churl! drink all! and leave no friendly drop
To help me after!—I will kiss thy lips—
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,
To make me die with a restorative!——
Thy lips are warm!
Watchman (within). Lead, boy.—Which way?
Jul. Yea, noise?—then I'll be brief!——O happy dagger!—
This is thy sheath!—There rust, and let me die!

Her husband has expired in her bosom—she dies upon his yet warm lips.

This completes the victory of Love over Fortune and over Death; but a further triumph awaits it—

over that living Hate which, in this world, has been its deadliest foe. Such is the noble subject of that long concluding scene which Shakespeare has so carefully wrought, but of which our corrupted stage wholly deprives us in performance.

At the close of the piece, as at its opening, the dramatist assembles before us the startled citizens of Verona, the heads of the rival houses, and the sovereign, who is kinsman to Paris and Mercutio. The Friar, with solemn simplicity, explains to them the tragic spectacle which has brought them together:—

> Romeo, there dead, was husband to that Juliet;
> And she, there dead, that Romeo's faithful wife:
> I married them, &c. . . .
> . . . And, if aught in this
> Miscarried by my fault, let my old life
> Be sacrific'd, some hour before his time,
> Unto the rigour of severest law.

The immediate answer, from the highest civil authority, the prince himself, is one of respectful acquiescence—

> We still have known thee for a holy man.

The Friar's narrative is confirmed by the evidence of Romeo's man, of Paris's page, and of Romeo's letter to his father—which, let us observe, furnishes the crowning testimony to the deliberateness, not rashness, of his suicide:—

> *Prince.* This letter doth make good the friar's words,
> Their course of love, the tidings of her death:
> And here he writes—that he did buy a poison
> Of a poor 'pothecary, and therewithal
> Came to this vault to die, and lie with Juliet.

The prince proceeds—not, as our modern critics do, to hold forth about the rashness of the lovers—but to point out to the heads of the hostile families the visible judgment of God upon *their* wickedness:—

> Where be these enemies?——Capulet, Montague!
> See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
> That Heaven finds means to kill your joys with love!——
> And I, for winking at your discords too,
> Have lost a brace of kinsmen.—All are punish'd.

Their instant repentance and reconciliation over the remains of their children, are expressed with the most religious solemnity :—

Cap. .O brother Montague, give me thy hand :
This is my daughter's jointure, for no more
Can I demand.
Mon. But I can give thee more;
For I will raise her statue in pure gold;
That, while Verona by that name is known,
There shall no figure at such rate be set,
As that of true and faithful Juliet.
Cap. As rich shall Romeo by his lady lie,
Poor sacrifices of our enmity!

This is, surely, no lamenting over youthful indiscretion, but the very crowning of martyred Love—as indicated, also, in the closing strain, from the lips of the afflicted prince :—

A glooming peace this morning with it brings;
The sun, for sorrow, will not shew his head:
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;
Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished:
For never was a story of more woe,
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo!

We have now, we believe, completely demonstrated :—

1. That the hero and heroine of this play, so far from presenting types of peculiarly Italian character, and so exhibiting a temperament peculiarly rash, impetuous, and vehement, are personages of ideal beauty, dignity, and harmony, physical, moral, and intellectual. That not only is each of the two characters endowed individually with this beautiful and harmonious proportion; but that the sympathy between the two is ideally perfect—a unison so entire as not even Shakespeare has elsewhere assigned to any pair of lovers. That, consequently, the rapidity and the force of their mutual passion result, above all, from that absolutely perfect sensitive and imaginative sympathy — not merely from a sympathetic vehemence of the blood. That, in short, we have, in the courtship of this pair, and their union in life and

death, the most perfect ideal of youthful love, in its most exquisite delicacy, its most exalted dignity, and its most heroic constancy, no less than in its most glowing ardour. And that the moral resulting from the dramatic development of this poetical conception, is one of the greatest and most important that morality itself can teach—engaging the deepest of passions on the side of virtue, by demonstrating that the love which is most genuine and constant in its nature can alone be most truly and exquisitely voluptuous.

2. That, consequently, the source of the tragic action of the piece lies not at all in any defect of character in the hero and heroine;—that, on the contrary, its tragic interest resides in the continual and studied opposition which the dramatist has maintained between their deserts and their experience—between their own delicately though healthily virtuous nature and conduct, and the external evils that beset them, on the one hand, in the mean or selfish, the foolish or vicious dispositions of those around them,—on the other, in the constant persecution of untoward accident;—so that their eventual fate in this life demands from us the deepest and tenderest pity, unmixed with any particle of blame;—while, even in death, the beauty, purity, and heroism of their mutual devotion, are sanctified by the poet, with every religious circumstance, in the sympathy of their fellow-citizens and the veneration of posterity.

3. That as regards the great social question, as to the due relation between parental authority and filial choice respecting the marriage of children, the admonition administered by the whole tenour of this drama, is addressed, not to children against marrying without their parents' consent, but to parents against setting at nought in this matter the feelings of their children.

9.—THEATRICAL PERVERSION OF THIS PLAY.—ITS RESTORATION RECOMMENDED.—MISS HELEN FAUCIT'S JULIET.

How, then, can it have been, that the reverse of all this, as our opening pages have indicated, has come to be the established interpretation of this great dramatic poem, to the degradation of its leading personages, and the proportionate disparagement of the poet? The space demanded from us by the primary portion of our present task, the exposition of Shakespeare's work itself, leaves us no room to pursue this secondary inquiry in the detail which it deserves; but it is indispensable to offer, at least, a few general indications on the subject, which may tend to suggest an effective and permanent remedy.

A very cursory glance over the history of our national culture, in this case as in others, will suffice to dispel the mystery. That exotic and vitiated school of taste which prevailed in our country from the time of the Stuart Restoration to that of the French Revolution, reigned peculiarly on our stage and in our theatrical criticism. Shakespeare became its greatest victim, precisely because he was the greatest genius of the truly national and vigorous age preceding. And in like manner, the greater any individual work of his happened to be, the more it was sure to suffer from theatrical or critical handling. Other of his noblest compositions, as we have recently shown in the instance of 'Macbeth,' had been unsparingly corrupted and profaned by earlier, and therefore, perhaps, more excusable hands; but the piece now in question, we regret to say it, was reserved for Garrick to *improve* according to the critical cánons and the false refinement of the eighteenth century. To these he added the overweening vanity and the meretricious taste of a mere actor, though a great one; and one of their

most signal results has come down to us in the still current *Garrickization* of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet.'

We have shown already with what successful art Shakespeare has exalted in our imaginations the captivation of Juliet to the senses and the heart of Romeo, by making his first contact with it instantly banish from his breast a fondly cherished passion for a highly beautiful, though unsympathetic, object. The *improver*, therefore, most effectively commences his task of vulgarization to the level of the reigning taste, by striking Rosaline, and Romeo's unrequited passion for her, utterly out of the piece. Still, one would think, he might have left us the effect of that mutual love at first sight, shown on both parts to be so genuine, unprejudiced, and unmixed a feeling, by the fact of each being quite a stranger to the other. But no—that would not have been doing the work of *improvement* thoroughly enough,—and so, a *previous* passion for Juliet is absolutely *substituted* for his love to Rosaline! —as thus:—

> Love, heavy lightness! serious vanity!
> Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
> This love feel I; *but such my froward fate,*
> *That there I love, where most I ought to hate.*
> Dost thou not laugh, my friend?—*Oh, Juliet, Juliet!*

And so on, throughout the dialogues relating, in Shakespeare's play, to Rosaline;—with this further *improvement*—that whereas Shakespeare, with his uniform delicacy and propriety, not only keeps the love of Romeo for Juliet a secret from all his male acquaintance except his confidential servant and his confessor, but causes his previous avowal regarding Rosaline to be made only to his more delicate and sympathising kinsman Benvolio,—Garrick, on the contrary, transfers the better half of Benvolio's portion in this first colloquy to *Mercutio*—having also the excessive stupidity to make the following bit of dialogue pass between Mercutio and Romeo, *after* he has made the latter tell them he is in love with *Juliet*:—

Mer. Tell me, in sadness, who she is you love.
Rom. In sadness, then, I love a woman.
Mer. I aim'd so near, when I suppos'd you lov'd.
Rom. A right good marksman!—And she's fair I love—
But knows not of my love; 'twas through my eyes
The shaft enpierc'd my heart; chance gave the wound
Which time can never heal: no star befriends me;
To each sad night succeeds a dismal morrow;
And still 'tis hopeless love, and endless sorrow!

Yes, good people, it is actually to cure him of "hopeless love" for *Juliet*, that Garrick's Romeo is persuaded by his friends to go to Capulet's—though, indeed, he shews himself rather intractable:—

Let come what may, once more I will behold
My Juliet's eyes! drink deeper of affliction:
I'll watch the time; and, mask'd from observation,
Make known my sufferings, but conceal my name.
Though hate and discord 'twixt our sires increase,
Let in our hearts dwell love and endless peace!

Bravo, David Garrick!—a rare commencement!—Now, to a worthy sequel, in the masking scene. There, as David's Benvolio and Mercutio are already privy to the whole affair, there is no reason why they should not *lend a hand* in the courting of Juliet; and so we have the following:—

Rom. Cousin Benvolio, do you mark that lady
Which doth enrich the hand of yonder gentleman?
Ben. I do.
Rom. Oh! she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night,
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.
The measure done, I'll wait her to her place,
And, touching hers, make happy my rude hand.
Be still, be still, my fluttering heart!
[*During the dance, Romeo goes and sits by Juliet.*
Rom. (*Leading Juliet from her chair*). If I profane, with my unworthy hand,
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this. [*Kisses her hand.*
Jul. Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much;
For palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.
Rom. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
Jul. Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
Rom. *Thus, then, dear saint, let lips put up their prayer.*
[*Salutes her.*

Nurse. Madam, your mother craves a word with you.
[*Romeo and Juliet go up the stage.*
Mercutio. What is her mother?
Nurse (*to Mercutio*). Marry, bachelor,
Her mother is the lady of the house,
And a good lady, and a wise and virtuous.
I nurs'd her daughter, heiress to Lord Capulet:
I tell you, he that can lay hold on her,
Shall have the chinks.
Mer. Is she a Capulet?—
Come, Romeo, let's be gone—the sport is over.
Rom. Ay, so I fear—the more is my mishap.

The delicacy and propriety of all this are carried, by the improver, a degree or two further in the next scene, where the loose jesting of Shakespeare's Mercutio regarding Rosaline—

I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
By her high forehead, and her scarlet lip,
By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh, &c.—

is made to be associated, in the speaker's mind and in ours, with the person of *Juliet!* But better still is the transferring to Juliet, in like manner, in the delicate mouth of Mercutio, the "white wench's black eye"—notwithstanding the marked contrast which Shakespeare has indicated between the personal appearance of Rosaline and the

Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear,

of Juliet. And best of all is our improver's making Mercutio actually exclaim, by the like substitution, "Why that same *pale, hard-hearted wench,* that *Juliet,* torments him so, that he will sure run mad!"

Arrived at this point in "the acting play," we hardly need observe, that our friend Garrick has pretty well disenchanted us from that ideal conception of his hero, and especially of his heroine, into which that extravagant Shakespeare seeks to exalt us! It is also worth remarking that, according to this improved arrangement, Mercutio is made to seek the combat with Tybalt, knowing Romeo to be in love with Tybalt's kinswoman.

In like manner, Rosaline being put wholly out of existence, the simple, kind-hearted bantering addressed by Shakespeare's friar to Romeo, on his change of mistresses, is here *improved* into an *Oh you bad boy* sort of lecture, every syllable of which is the offspring of David's "own pure brain:"—

> But tell me, son—and call thy reason home—
> Is not this love the offspring of thy folly,
> Bred from thy wantonness and thoughtless brain?—
> Be heedful, youth, and see thou stop betimes,
> Lest that thy rash ungovernable passions,
> O'er-leaping duty, and each due regard,
> Hurry thee on, through short-liv'd, dear-bought pleasures,
> To cureless woes and lasting penitence!

And this is made to be addressed, by his best friend, to him whom his very enemy tells us that "Verona brags of" as "a virtuous and well-governed youth"! One passage like this, after our improver's previous vulgarization of the hero, is enough to fix that notion of him, simply as *an imprudent young man*, which possesses the common apprehension. The like notion of rash wilfulness in the heroine—after she, too, has been dragged down in the earlier scenes to the commonplace level—is favoured especially by the cutting out of the two later scenes, with her father and with Paris, those passages in which Shakespeare has most forcibly exhibited the tyrannical, capricious, and brutal unfeelingness of the former, and the cold-hearted impertinence of the latter;—while a paltry, sentimental dirge scene is substituted for the passage of humorous levity between Peter and the musicians, which we have already demonstrated Shakespeare's dramatic purpose in introducing.

But it is in his dealing with the death-scene of the lovers, that Garrick, with most perverse ingenuity, has given the finishing-stroke to his distortion and degradation of the principal subject, and the most damning evidence of his own critical incompetence and presumption. After mutilating and dislocating, in the most deplorable way, that final soliloquy of

Romeo's which Shakespeare has worked out with such strictly logical sequence and coherence, the Shakespeare-mender proceeds to improve the catastrophe after the following sagacious manner.

We have shown how and why Shakespeare, true to the leading spirit of his drama, has arranged everything so as to obviate as much as possible the physical repulsiveness of the act of suicide:—

> Here's to my love!——O true apothecary,
> Thy drugs are quick.—Thus with a kiss I die!

But the *amended* play, in contempt of Shakespeare, and of Romeo's "true" and well-bribed apothecary, makes Romeo say, *after* taking the poison which he expects to kill him instantly,

> Eyes, look your last;
> Arms, take your last embrace, &c.,

till he ends with

> Soft—she breathes, and stirs!

And now we are actually called upon to believe, that he *forgets* all at once the purpose and the act which have absorbed his faculties for the last twelve hours. Quoth Garrick's poisoned Romeo:—

> She speaks—she lives—and we shall still be bless'd!—
> My kind, propitious stars o'erpay me now
> For all my sorrows past! Rise, rise, my Juliet;
> And from this cave of death, this house of horror,
> Quick let me snatch thee to thy Romeo's arms,
> There breathe a vital spirit in thy lips,
> And call thee back, my soul, to life and love!
> [*Raises her, and brings her forward in his arms.*

Shakespeare, we have seen, poor simple man! makes Juliet awake refreshed and self-possessed as the Friar had promised her she should—

> Thou shalt awake as from a pleasant sleep,—

and so, accordingly, her first words are:—

> O comfortable friar, *where is my lord?—*
> *I do remember well where I should be,*
> *And there I am.——Where is my Romeo?*

But Garrick's *Juliet improved* is in no such haste either to find out where she is, or to recognize her husband. Shakespeare had foolishly imagined that his reviving heroine's first thought would be of Romeo—but the excellent David (bless his discriminating soul!) makes *his* Juliet think first of *Paris*:—

> *Jul.* Where am I?—Defend me, powers!
> . . . . . .
> *Bless me! how cold it is!—Who's there?*
> *Rom.* Thy husband;
> 'Tis thy Romeo, Juliet—rais'd from despair
> To joys unutterable! Quit, quit this place,
> And let us fly together.
> *Jul.* Why do you force me so?—I'll ne'er consent.—
> My strength may fail me, but my will's unmov'd—
> I'll not wed Paris—Romeo is my husband.
> *Rom.* Romeo *is* thy husband—I am that Romeo—
> Nor all the opposing powers of earth or man
> Shall break our bonds, or tear thee from my heart!

Garrick's Juliet now begins to come a little to herself, and then we have the following happily and tastefully imagined scene:—

> *Jul.* I know that voice—its magic sweetness wakes
> My tranced soul—I now remember well
> Each circumstance.—Oh, my lord, my husband—
> [*Going to embrace him.*
> Dost thou avoid me, Romeo? Let me touch
> Thy hand, and taste the cordial of thy lips——
> You fright me—speak!—Oh, let me hear some voice
> Besides my own in this drear vault of death,
> Or I shall faint.—Support me.—
> *Rom.* Oh, I cannot—
> I have no strength—but want thy feeble aid.—
> Cruel poison!
> *Jul.* Poison!—what means my lord?—thy trembling voice,
> Pale lips and swimming eyes—Death's in thy face!
> *Rom.* It is indeed—I struggle with him now;
> The transports that I felt,
> To hear thee speak, and see thy opening eyes,
> *Stopp'd for a moment his impetuous course,*
> And all my mind was happiness and thee;—
> But now the poison rushes through my veins;—
> I have not time to tell——

Fate brought me to this place, to take a last,
Last farewell of my love, and with thee die!
Jul. Die!—Was the friar false?
Rom. I know not that—
I thought thee dead; distracted at the sight—
O fatal speed!—drank poison, kiss'd thy lips,
And found within thy arms a precious grave!
But, in that moment—oh! [*He falls.*
Jul. And did I wake for this?
Rom. My powers are blasted;
'Twixt death and love I'm torn, I am distracted;
But death's strongest.—And must I leave thee, Juliet?
Oh cruel, cursed fate! in sight of heaven——
Jul. Thou rav'st!—lean on my breast.
Rom. Fathers have flinty hearts—no tears can melt 'em—
Nature pleads in vain—children must be wretched!
Jul. Oh, my breaking heart!
Rom. She is my wife—our hearts are twin'd together;—
Capulet, forbear;—Paris, [*rises again*] loose your hold;—
Pull not our heart-strings thus;—they crack—they break.—
Oh, Juliet! Juliet!
[*Falls and dies.—Juliet faints on Romeo's body.*

The greater part of this *improvement* demands no comment, after we have so fully considered Shakespeare's own treatment of the matter. But it may be well to point out the especial absurdity of the concluding sentences, in which Romeo is made to exclaim against "fathers" and against "Paris." Romeo himself, we have seen, has a peculiarly tender father; and Shakespeare has studiously kept him ignorant, both of Capulet's brutality to Juliet, and of Paris's impertinence,—in order that, in Romeo's final scene, no harsher feeling might interfere to disturb those harmonizing sentiments of love and pity in the hero's breast which so exquisitely soften the tragic interest of his parting moments. In like manner, compare Shakespeare's representation of Juliet's deportment on reviving,—so remote from resentment against the Friar, whom she knows to deserve it so little,—or even against that Fortune of whom she is really the victim,—with Garrick's improved version of it, after he has actually made the Friar arrive *behind* his appointed time:—

Jul. (*Lying on the neck of Romeo*). Who's there?
Friar L. Ha! Juliet awake!—and Romeo dead!—
And Paris, too!—Oh, what an unkind hour
Is guilty of this lamentable chance!
Jul. Here he is still, and I will hold him fast;
They shall not tear him from me!
Friar L. Patience, lady!
Jul. *O thou cursed friar!*—Patience!—
Talk'st thou of patience to a wretch like me?
Friar L. O fatal error!—Rise, thou fair distress'd,
And fly this scene of death.
Jul. Come thou not near me—
Or this dagger shall quit my Romeo's death!
[*Draws a dagger.*

And then, as if to remove the last chance of bringing back our apprehensions in any degree towards the dignity of Shakespeare's own conception, the religiously solemn closing scene of explanation, admonition, repentance, and reconcilement, is utterly suppressed!

And that same David Garrick could deal in such a manner with a masterpiece of William Shakespeare! Truly, while considering this, one is tempted almost to pardon his friend Johnson's rather unfriendly remark, and believe that in reality "Punch" could have "no feelings."———But then, the British public still complacently tolerates, on the scene, this perversion of the most harmoniously pathetic of tragedies into little better than a vulgar melodrama, half puerile, half disgusting. —Ay, *there* is, now-a-days, the greater marvel, and the greater disgrace! The constant reaction, for good or for evil, of the state of our Shakespearian acting upon that of our Shakespearian criticism, and upon the intelligence of our Shakespearian reading, we have distinctly indicated on a former occasion,* and may find an occasion to demonstrate more particularly. Meanwhile, if Shakespeare be fated for some time longer to undergo theatrical *perversion*, it would be some consolation to us, at least, if *childishness* might cease to be superadded. Let 'The Family Shakespeare' be used with all possible diligence in the school-room, and the Nursery Shakespeare† in the nursery; but, in

* See page 197, of this volume. † 'Lamb's Tales,' for instance.

the name of British common sense, and manliness, and womanhood, let them be banished quickly and for ever from our adult criticism and our full-grown stage.

The more, however, that our Shakespearian stage is degraded on the whole, the more we are bound to render all possible honour to any instance of a better spirit arising by its native energy, under such unfavourable auspices, upon that stage itself. On a former occasion* we have pointed out, in relation to another great heroine of Shakespeare's, the laudable courage with which our most genuine Shakespearian performer has disregarded, in her expression of that and other characters, all vulgar theatrical tradition. Her personation of *Juliet* affords a yet more striking example of the same nature. The circumstances which for the last two years have closed against Shakespeare the doors of our "great national theatres," compel us to refer the reader, for collateral testimony on this point, to the journals of Scotland, Ireland, and France, especially those of Edinburgh and Paris.†

That great central portion of this heroine's part which extends from the balcony scene to that of the sleeping-draught, having suffered least from the hands of the improver, affords most scope for the actress to shew in what degree she is qualified to understand and to embody the poet's conception and developement of the character. In Miss Helen Faucit's impersonation, those passages where the passion ebbs and flows with gentle undulation,—as in the courtship, the marriage, and the parting scenes,—have an inexpressible charm, in their delicate frankness, their elegant simplicity, and

* See pages 27 to 35, of this volume.

† See, especially, 'Le Messager,' 20th Jan., and 'The Scotsman,' 26th April, 1845. It is interesting to trace how thoroughly the Edinburgh critic, and the Parisian (M. Edouard Thierry), looking from such different points of view, concur in characterising that union of sweetness with dignity, and of gentleness with energy, which so peculiarly marks this enthusiastic artist as a Shakespearian performer. "Cette grâce si fine, *si spirituelle ensemble et si naïve*," is, for example, the phrase in which M. Thierry very happily defines the particular character of her gracefulness.

sweetness of modulation;—the scenes which exhibit violently conflicting emotions, especially that in which Juliet receives the intelligence of the fatal duel, begin to develope the strength which, in the actress, no less than in the heroine, resides beneath her tenderness of nature;—and then, the series of trying scenes which Juliet undergoes with her parents and her nurse, with Paris and with the Friar, ending in the great solitary scene of the sleeping-potion, draw forth all the energies of this performer, and establish her unrivalled capability of exalting the heroine's character above that level of mere dramatized romance to which both our criticism and our stage have brought it down, to that elevation of antique heroism to which the dramatist himself has raised it.

But the more that any actress proves herself capable of realizing Shakespeare's conception, in those passages where the improvers have permitted it to remain unimpaired, the more afflicting it is to see her compelled to waste her noblest energies in bestowing dignity upon spurious passages which are little susceptible of it. Commonplace performers find their account in receiving Shakespeare from the manager, ready vulgarized to their hands; but the man or woman of genius, the high and true histrionic artist, has everything to lose by such a process. The essential vulgarity of the spurious passages helps to veil a vulgar expression of the genuine ones; while, on the other hand, the noblest expression of the latter has a sort of degradation reflected upon it from the very efforts of the same worthy performer to dignify the spurious portions.

Miss Helen Faucit, our only Juliet on the stage, of such true Shakespearian inspiration, has every reason to complain and protest against the prejudice done to her powers and her genius by the continuance of so gross a theatrical perversion. Let her, however—and let every one who still cherishes on our languishing stage a spark of genuine devotion to their art—persevere in their efforts and their hopes. The time for a full appreciation and assiduous culture

of *uncorrupted* Shakespearian acting, as indispensable to a general and complete understanding even of the *written* Shakespeare, is not far distant. Meanwhile, if there were any manager with taste and spirit enough to restore to us *Shakespeare's* 'Romeo and Juliet' upon the scene, it would afford the public, not only one of the noblest dramatic enjoyments, but a most instructive study of the poet, to witness Miss Faucit's rendering of the heroine's part in all its pristine purity—could a *Romeo* of equal genius, and grace, and feeling, and delicacy, be found, to support her.

10.—NEW PERVERSION OF THIS PLAY, IN ITS LATE REVIVAL AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.—INCREASED NECESSITY FOR ITS GENUINE RESTORATION.

[May 29th, 1847.]

WHEN writing these last paragraphs, we could little anticipate such an exhibition as that which was brought forward on the boards of one of the patent theatres of London, in the following December, 1845. For the honour of our country—the country of Shakespeare—we could wish that such an exhibition should be utterly forgotten: but there are circumstances connected with that performance, which leave us not at liberty to pass it over unnoticed, but demand that we should characterize it distinctly and permanently.

First of all, then, some few weeks after the appearance of the foregoing exposition (a remarkable *coincidence*, to say the least) it was thought proper to abandon that Garrick version of this play which had kept the stage unintermittedly since Garrick's time,

and return to Shakespeare's text, though still with essential mutilations. For this restoration the critics of the London press gave unqualified credit to the manager and the actors—taking occasion to treat Garrick, and his "balderdash," with especial contumely.

So far, their applause of this Shakespearian revival might be very allowable. But what are we to think when we find them, while condemning Garrick's perversion on the one hand, approving on the other a violence to Shakespeare in the personation of the two principal characters, and of the hero especially, at the contemplation of which Garrick himself would have stood aghast!

For the special purpose, then, it should seem, of restoring Shakespeare's work in all its purity, it was announced that Romeo and Juliet were to be personated by two transatlantic sisters—the she-Romeo being advertised as the peculiar and irresistible attraction.

Had it been announced that this hero and heroine were to be represented by a brother and sister, the demand of indulgence from what ought to be the common human feelings and perceptions of any audience, would have been rather large. But in the present instance, a vastly greater demand was made: we were called upon to be interested and delighted by nothing less than the exhibition of *two sisters* in this peculiar dramatic relation;—and to make the matter complete, we were duly given to understand that no particular stress was laid upon the feminine qualifications of the lady personating the heroine of love—that the grand charm was to be looked for in the masculine ones of the lady representing the hero.

We will waste no words upon demonstrating the disgustingly monstrous grossness of such a perversion. To any human beings, whether calling themselves men or women, who need such an argument to convince them, the argument itself would be uselessly addressed. It is idle to talk (as we find certain critics doing at the time) as if there was nothing in *the per-*

formance itself to remind one's very physical apprehensions that the *soi-disant* impassioned hero was a woman. That any male auditors could think so, would surely prove that we live in a time when there are men with so little manhood as to have almost lost all sense of the essentially different manner in which this passion, especially, manifests itself in the two sexes respectively—as not to feel the revoltingly unnatural absurdity, for instance, of all the hysterical sobbing and blubbering which, in even the most *mannish* of women, *must* be produced by such scenes as that between Romeo and the Friar, when the former is acquainted with his banishment,—and more especially that of the tomb, over the seeming corpse of Juliet.

To pursue this consideration in all the detail into which it would naturally lead us, would be so overpoweringly repugnant to our own taste and feeling, that we must at once decline the task,—besides that, as we have hinted already, no such exposition can be of much avail to either man so unmanly or woman so unwomanly, as to need it proving to them that the Juliet of Shakespeare deserves at least a *man* for her lover. We gladly hasten to dismiss this consideration altogether — to exclude from our mind (which no audience could ever do) the consciousness of the real sex of Romeo's representative, — and, leaving aside the monstrous *epicene expression* of the part, to consider the essential *conception* of it which the actress, with such vigorous impropriety, exerted herself to realize.

And here, we must say, the violence done to the moral nature of Shakespeare's hero, was quite as great as that done to his physical nature by this unnatural personation. So far from exhibiting anything of the gentle and sympathetic as well as noble and valiant spirit of the Romeo of Shakespeare,—if the she-Romeo aimed at any ideal whatever, it was an ideal of the most vulgarly selfish and headlong will and appetite. From the beginning to the end,—whether with Ben-

volio and Mercutio,—with Juliet,—with the Friar,—with Tybalt,—with the Apothecary,—with his own servant,—or with Paris,—there was one determined inveteracy of tone and manner, — which, with the intensely immoveable setness of look,—the ungainly, angular figure and movement,—the singularly harsh features,—the husky voice of the actress herself,—the nasal utterance and awkward vowel pronunciation of her country,—combined to produce a whole as diametrically opposed to the ideal of Romeo as we have expounded it in the preceding pages, as could have been devised even by the most vivid and powerful imagination. Nor was all this coarse, unmodulated vehemence the less startling because, so far as the histrionic heroine was concerned, it was addressed to a personage with no touch of refinement and no spark of poetry. While the whole personation was rendered but the more revolting by that very restoration of Shakespeare's *words*, to which the *action* was more than ever violently unsuited.

In short, if there be anything true in such a personation, then our previous exposition is merely nonsense. If our exposition be right, then the manager who brought forward, the auditors who admired, and the critics who applauded such a performance, have heaped upon Shakespeare an accumulation of indignity which can be expiated only by their seeking and seizing the earliest occasion of shewing to the world that they are cured of their bad taste or have discovered their mistake.

Now, we say, more than ever, are we bound to insist that the first opportunity ought to be taken of producing on the London boards *this* play, most especially, with the best resources for the personation of the hero and heroine that the profession might even now afford. This, which was very desirable before, is imperatively called for now. That this piece indeed, is one peculiarly demanding a parity genius between the representatives of its two lead characters, we fully admit; but this consider

Digitized with financial assistance from the Government of Maharashtra on 18 July, 2018

becomes quite secondary in the present emergency. It is no longer a question of rendering this drama adequately on the whole,—but of expelling the intensely gross misconception of it lately impressed on the minds of so large a portion of the London public, —by the only thoroughly effective means—the bodily presentment of its leading characters, true as to their general conception, and on the feminine side at least—which, we will venture to say, in the great drama of Love, is the more important of the two—with richly and delicately poetic grace and refinement superadded. Let this be done, with a return *bonâ fide* to the text, the *whole* text, and *nothing but* the text, of Shakespeare —mere verbal suppressions apart, in compliance with modern decorum,—let this once be made familiar to our metropolitan public,—and there is little cause to fear that so unnatural an outrage on the great master genius of our country as that recently perpetrated at the Haymarket Theatre, will ever more be tolerated on the London stage.

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